

Ngày nhận bài: 22/08/2023 | Ngày phản biện: 13/09/2023 | Ngày xuất bản: 22/08/2026

Tác giả: Vinh Ngoc LUONG (Academy of Journalism and Communication)

In Vietnam, policy communication is often identified with the Marxism - Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought, along with the Party and State's guidelines and policies. Human resources for communication have been trained by the former Central School of Communication and now the Academy of Journalism and Communication with more than 50 years of experience. However, policy communication and political communication are two different activities. Although they are both information dissemination activities, there are differences in the content and methods of conveying information to the audience.

1. What is policy communication?

According to international experts, a policy is a set of goals, guidelines, and actions aimed at realizing the government's goals. Government policy is public policy, while the policy of non-public organizations is private policy (although rarely used). The private policy is also a set of goals, guidelines, and actions to achieve the goals of a group of people belonging to different organizations in society. The private policy is towards the social community but first and foremost to realize the interests of their organization. Meanwhile, public policy refers to the goals, decisions, and actions of the government towards serving the interests of the whole society.

In Vietnam, policy is a widely used term, especially in matters related to politics and regulations. According to the Vietnamese dictionary of the Encyclopedia Publishing House, "policy" is understood as "the guidelines and policies of a government or a political party, based on the characteristics of the domestic and international situation."

The Communist Party of Vietnam is the only political force leading the state and society in Vietnam. The Party leads the state by outlining guidelines, strategies, and policy directions, which are the foundation for the state to issue policies. In essence, policies are issued by the state, but they are the concretization of the Party's guidelines, strategies, and policy directions to serve the interests of the entire people. Policy is always associated with political power, with the ruling party and the public-state power apparatus. In principle, the Party sets out a way for the state to institutionalize into law. Hence, the Party's policy becomes the soul of the law or incarnates into the law. In this sense, law is also policy.

The state manages society in general by enacting laws, but to carry on specific affairs, the government must also enact policies which are sub-law documents called public policies. Public policy is also the political will of the ruling party, which is explicitly expressed in the government's political decisions. These decisions aim to maintain social status or solve social problems, meeting the needs of people.

In short, in Vietnam, the term policy is understood in both broad and narrow sense. Broadly, policies include the Party's viewpoints and guidelines. Narrowly, "policy" is just public policy, including the constitution, laws, and the set of goals, decisions, and government actions towards the public sector.

Based on the above concept, policy communication also has two different broad and narrow aspects. Policy communication in the broad sense coincides with propaganda and dissemination of the Party's viewpoints and guidelines, the State's policies and laws towards the goal of raising political awareness and building people's trust in the Party, the state and regime, and the promotion of active and self-conscious actions of the people in the process of national construction and defense. This activity carries the characteristics of our regime - the one-party regime.

In a narrow sense, policy communication is understood as public policy communication. Accordingly, public policy communication is a part of the state's public relations (PR) activities (including parliament and government) to spread laws, government policies, and state activities to the public to raise awareness, call for support, and encourage public action in implementing state policies.

Policy communication is different from communication in that it is a multi-dimensional information exchange and sharing activity. Policy communication of the National Assembly and the Government, as well as the ministries and departments, not only inform the people about their policies but also have the responsibility to explain, make information transparent, provide information on services, and solve media crises, etc. In the current trend of integration and democratization of political life, using the term policy communication as the dissemination of laws and government policy (public policy) is consistent with Vietnamese and international practices.

2. The role of policy communication

Policy is an effective tool for the state to perform its functions and tasks, maintain the existence and development of the country, develop the economy and society, and serve the people. Through public policy, the Party orients social relationships. From the perspective of national management and governance, the State uses public policy as an important means to influence different fields of social life to achieve directional goals. Individuals in society are the direct beneficiaries and implementers of the policy. Therefore, policies are only effective when they are received and implemented by individuals in society through policy communication activities.

Policy communication is highly valued by countries worldwide because it aims to raise people's awareness, unify society, ensure government power, and preserve and promote national cultural identity. Without policy communication, policies are unable to be realized through people's actions and have no social consensus. Experts agree that a policy that does not reach the people is considered no policy, while a policy that is misunderstood by the people is a bad policy. Without communication, people do not know what the state is doing, which social problems are being solved, what the current foreign policy is, or which information is affecting people's interests. The transparent administrative procedures to prevent abuse of power and corruption will also not be performed. Without policy communication, there would be no social consensus, and the credibility of the government shall decrease or collapse.

3. The necessity of training human resources for policy communication in Vietnam

Vietnam has experience in training communication and journalism personnel, but does not yet have intensive training in policy communication.

Although communication and journalism are close to policy communication, they do not completely coincide. Communicators often receive information from a certain source and find ways to spread it to the largest audience in the most convincing way to build trust. People working in journalism agencies capture information from all areas of life and express them in media products to convey them to the public. Unlike propagandists and journalists, the first job of a policy communicator is to understand the needs and aspirations of the public to participate in the policy-making process of the state. After having policies, communicators design them into messages and then use the press and other media such as direct communication, education, and training systems, activities of organizations, or cultural institutions to spread the message to the public in communication campaigns and projects. Additionally, policy communicators must be ready to deal with communication crises and feedback, exercise accountability, and communicate back to the public about their concerns and problems in policy implementation and enforcement. Public relations trains public relations officers for both government agencies and businesses. Policy communication is also a part of public relations, but it is only public relations of the state and agencies of the state at the central and local levels.

In the current trend of democratizing the country's political life, the central state, ministries, and localities need to have a policy communication department in charge of spreading the constitution, laws, presidential orders, and the government's policies to the public. Some ministries and municipal localities have established communication departments and spokespersons to manage and carry out their own communication. Today's socio-political organizations not only manage, direct and operate their own diplomatic department but also have to use other means of communication, manage media, and handle media crises, if any arise. Policy communicators are arranged in the following agencies: Government office, Ministry office, Municipal People's Committee office; specialized units of information and communication; and spokesman. They

perform the following functions: giving interviews, operating the portal, organizing press conferences, developing proposals for press agencies, organizing periodic press information, and managing leaders' public perception. Their work helps public agencies to provide prompt, accurate, timely, and complete information; direct public opinion; clarify information; maintain accountability; manage crisis; and build the image of the central and local government. To be capable and qualified to hold such positions in state agencies, these human resources must at least be trained at the university level. Assoc Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Dung, former Dean of Faculty of Journalism at the Academy of Journalism and Communication stated that "It is essential to retrain and update knowledge and skills for personnel of Government, ministries and departments' media units in a systematic and thorough manner, ensuring this team to have professional views, attitudes, personality, and communication skills, meeting the requirements of leadership and management in the increasingly international integration."(1)

Besides general knowledge like other disciplines, people who are trained in policy communication must have a background in political science and public policy; communication science; the interactive relationship between the media and public policy, the policy cycle; the objectives, content, and methods of policy communication; and in-depth theory in the management and organization of policy communication activities. Additionally, they must be equipped with skills in research, strategic planning, and policy communication planning; skills in managing policy communication activities; skills in organizing and implementing production plans for policy communication products; communication crisis resolution skills; and skills in analysis, evaluation, and appraisal of policy communication programs, activities, products and services.

Policy communication is a work that the government, ministries, and localities have been doing in Vietnam. However, it has not been properly named because there is no consensus on perception. As a result, human resources for this activity have not been properly and intensively trained. That is also the reason why policy communication is not following international practice and is not effective and does not yet contribute to creating social consensus before, during, and after the policy promulgation.

Therefore, developing content and programs and training human resources in policy communication at a university level will not only solve cognitive problems, but also contribute to the science, standardization, and professionalization of human resources for a relatively new specialization in Vietnam.

Tài liệu tham khảo

REFERENCES

1. Nguyen Van Dung (2018). Issues of public policy communication in Vietnam today, Journal of Political Theory, Vol. 2, p.72.