

## TRAINING WORKING - SKILLS FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN VIETNAM: PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

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### ABSTRACT

There are many ethnicities living in a country world-wide. The authority state always tries to enact good policy to balance the rights and responsibilities of each ethnic co-existing in the territory. Building a good education for both majority and minority ethnic is the stable way for sustainable development in each country. Following that trend, in recent years, vocational training for ethnic minorities in Vietnam has been paid great attention by the central and local governments with the goal of narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor, between rural (including villages, plains and mountains) and urban areas. Despite many efforts of the government and other social organizations, there are many difficulties to do it well. The problem still has many limitations and the effect has not been as expected. In this research, the author will analyze the current situation of vocational training for ethnic minorities in Vietnam. From there, the author will take away the lessons and experience as well as recommend solutions to solve the problems in the future.

**Keywords:** vocational training; ethnic minority; problem; solution, Vietnam.

## INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic country with an area stretching from North to South, three-quarters of the area is forests and mountains. Ethnic minorities belonging to 53 different ethnic groups, account for 14.6% of the country's population. However, due to natural and geographical conditions, there is a disparity between the development level of ethnic minorities in mountainous areas compared with urban and plain areas. Therefore, in recent years, in order to realize the goal of sustainable development and shorten the gap between regions and ethnic groups, Vietnam has had many policies to support education, improve people's intellectual life and work skills for ethnic minorities. One of the remarkable policies is the development and improvement of the quality of vocational training for ethnic minorities. This is a very right and advanced policy of Vietnam's government. Because only with advanced knowledge and skills, can ethnic minorities themselves change their working methods, improve labor quality, and keep pace with economic and social development in modern society, with stable income and sustainable development, in harmony with nature and shortening the distance with the delta region.

## OVERVIEW OF THE ETHNIC MINORITIES IN VIETNAM

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic country with 54 ethnic groups living together. Kinh people make up 85.4% of the population of Vietnam, with 78.32 million people. The remaining 53 ethnic minorities (EMs) account for only 14.6% of the country's population.

There are also many differences between ethnic groups. Among them, the Chinese (Han ethnic group) have many cultural characteristics similar to Vietnamese culture, and they also play an important role in the Vietnamese economy. As a result, the Chinese are often not recognized as an "ethnic minority" in Vietnam. Other ethnic groups, such as the H'Mong and the Nung, mainly depend on farming and maintain a cultural life associated with the forests. Ethnic groups are also divided by language system. The languages of the Vietnamese ethnic groups are divided into 8 groups: Viet - Muong, Tay - Thai, Mon - Khmer, Mong - Dao, Ka dai, Nam Dao, Han and Tibetan. 96% of ethnic minorities speak their mother tongue.

Ethnic minorities often focus on mountainous and remote areas, but they are also scattered throughout the territory of Vietnam. Ethnic minorities living in urban areas are often more

affluent than ethnic minorities living in rural areas. Many villages and communes have several different ethnic groups living together. Geographical location plays an important role in the cultural practices of ethnic minorities, but also creates barriers to access to infrastructure and public services such as health and education.

Although ethnic minorities have differences in customs and habits, forests still play an important role for the majority of ethnic minorities. The Mong, Thai, Red Dao, Van Kieu, Ja Rai, Ede, and Ba Na people living in many provinces and cities across the country still rely on community forests. They have sacred forests for spiritual and religious purposes just like the Kinh people have temples and family churches. The customary law also stipulates the watershed forests and water source forests where people worship the Water God. There are also forests where the products of the whole village are harvested, such as medicinal herbs, firewood, and materials for making handicrafts. The traditional form of community-based forest management plays an important role in the customs and livelihoods of ethnic minorities in Vietnam.

In addition to forestry production, agricultural production is a livelihood for many ethnic minorities. Both forestry and agriculture require land. However, ethnic minorities still face many difficulties in terms of land rights to maintain production activities and cultural activities. In an effort to protect livelihoods and encourage environmental protection, some communities have been allocated land by the government to continue with traditional community-based forest management. However, this practice is not widely available. In 2015, only 26% of the total forest land was allocated to households, and only 2% was allocated to the community for management. In addition, although the Land Law recognizes customary land ownership rights, land is largely still under the management of the Government, and the Civil Code does not recognize the community as a legal entity.

There are many differences in policies, laws and regulations related to land and forest ownership between provinces across the country. This affects ethnic minority women. They are traditionally considered to be custodians of indigenous knowledge as well as forest guardians, but this role is not recognized in the law. The land information registration system just started (2014) requires both husband and wife's names on the land use right certificate. Even with their names on these documents, many women admit they lack confidence when making decisions regarding land use.

## **CURRENT STATUS OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN VIETNAM**

The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam guarantees equal rights for all Vietnamese citizens, including the rights of ethnic minorities. Vietnam does not have a separate law on ethnic minorities, but it does have its own ministerial-level agency in charge of ethnic minority issues, which is the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs. During the period 2011 - 2015, the State issued 180 legal documents to ensure the legitimate rights and interests of ethnic minorities. There are many policies that have shown good effectiveness such as Resolution No.30a/2008/NQ-CP on sustainable poverty reduction and the Policy on housing support for poor households. Although recognized in legal documents and policies, ethnic minorities are still vulnerable, especially when they lose the forests where their beliefs and customs originate. Resources for policy implementation are limited, leading to ineffective coordination and implementation. Land development and immigration put more pressure on the rights of ethnic minorities. In fact, the data from this survey is used for Development Policy Planning for Ethnic Minority Areas for the period 2016-2020.

In the past time, the state budget is still difficult, but ethnic policies have been prioritized by the Party and State to allocate resources to combine funding sources from international organizations and local budgets to investment in socio-economic development in ethnic minority areas. Policies in this period focus on implementing three breakthroughs in the country's socio-economic development strategy: environmental protection; vocational training - development of EM staff; propagating, disseminating and educating the law.

It can be said that the policy of vocational training for ethnic minorities is one of the fundamental and practical solutions to help each person and their family have a stable job and escape poverty sustainably. Project 1956 is considered as a new wind in the work of hunger eradication and sustainable poverty reduction, with the main content being vocational training for rural workers and ethnic minorities to overcome the shortage of production land, and to transform the labor structure, creating sustainable jobs for ethnic minorities. From year-round attachment to fields and scattered livestock, the scheme helps farmers in general, and ethnic minorities in particular, to access many non-agricultural occupations.

Through policies on vocational training for rural workers, 1.1 million ethnic minority people, mainly poor households, whose land has been acquired, received vocational training,

accounting for 14% of the total of nearly eight million people of working age receive vocational training. In the period 2010 - 2017, more than 812 thousand ethnic minority people have been trained, accounting for 21.8% of the total number of people receiving vocational training support. In 2016, 2017, there were about 1,600 ethnic minorities going to work abroad. Consulting for about 22,000 laborers to work abroad under contract or after returning home. Particularly in the first six months of 2018, training and support for 924 poor workers and ethnic minority households went to work in Japan and Korea under cooperation programs.

Currently, unemployment among ethnic minority youth is a prominent issue, up to 5.76%, 2.5 times higher than the national unemployment rate (2.34%). According to the survey results of the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, in the second quarter of 2018, there were about 313 thousand unemployed and unemployed rural youths, including ethnic minority youth.

Since 2016, Hanoi City has organized 1,165 vocational training classes at primary level for 40,405 people, of which: 61% of agricultural occupations and 39% of non-agricultural occupations. Out of the total number of apprentices, 2568 are from ethnic minorities. After vocational training, the number of people with jobs reached 85.6%, of which: 12.6% were employed by enterprises; 10.9% are sold products by enterprises; 75% self-employment and 1.5% set up cooperatives and enterprises.

## **LIMITATIONS IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN VIETNAM**

Despite many efforts of both central and local governments, there are still shortcomings in vocational training for people in ethnic minority areas. Specifically, the following issues:

***Vocational training has not been associated with job creation in accordance with practical needs***

Non-agricultural vocational training for ethnic minorities has not been effective in recent times. This is a fact that has not been pointed out until now, but has been pointed out immediately after Decision 1956 was implemented. Although there are many vocational training classes for ethnic minorities. In fact, the number of people after training often have unsustainable jobs. Most of the trainees, after receiving the certificate, put away or return to farming. The number



of ethnic minority employees with vocational training with intermediate and college degrees is still low, most of them have short-term vocational training. In addition, some occupations included in the curriculum have knowledge that is too high compared to the cognitive level of students. It can be seen that the training of non-agricultural occupations for ethnic minority students has not achieved the desired effect. The limitations in vocational training for ethnic minorities are partly due to the fact that some localities have not focused on propaganda, counseling and mobilizing ethnic minorities to learn vocational training, and are under pressure to assign training targets, etc. So, the efficiency is not high. This leads to training not in the direction of learning according to needs, but in the way that any teacher teaches the profession; teaching according to the movement, not yet associated with production establishments. The mechanism of prioritizing vocational training for ethnic minorities is not appropriate and difficult to implement.

***Vocational training has not attracted many ethnic minorities to participate***

According to current regulations, when participating in vocational training classes, ethnic minorities receive a maximum support level of 03 million VND/person/course. At the same time, a food allowance of 30,000 VND/person/day is also supported. Travel allowance of 200,000 VND/person/course if the training location is 15 km or more away from the residence. This regulation is intended to create motivation to encourage ethnic minorities to complete vocational training. In fact, it is not now that the State has a support policy, but there have been a series of support policies before, but a large number of people Ethnic minorities still turn their backs on this preferential policy.

Some apprentices, but due to their limited qualifications, it is not easy to acquire knowledge. In addition, the study time is not much, so it is very difficult for these people to have the opportunity to practice and apply the knowledge they have learned and create a stable income. Therefore, attracting people from ethnic minorities to attend vocational training classes is not easy. According to statistics from the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Cao Bang province, after 6 years of implementing the 1956 Project, the province has only trained over 25,200 people.

In addition, the non-agricultural vocational training has many shortcomings, workers cannot live by profession. The content and quality of vocational training is still heavily formal, not close to reality. Some localities could not maintain their jobs after training, wasting people's

time and training costs. For example, in Phu Tho, although in 2016 it trained over 20,000 people, according to the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs in the process of implementation, many difficulties and shortcomings need to be removed, that is: The structure of vocational training for rural workers who have not met the set targets, mainly agricultural vocational training, the rate of non-agricultural vocational training is low (accounting for about 30%), some occupations with limited training quality, labor Most of the post-apprenticeship workers create jobs by themselves, so they have completed their studies due to lack of capital and lack of product consumption markets.

***The implementation of the State policy on vocational training support for ethnic minorities remains unsuitable***

According to experts, besides making appropriate policies, whether ethnic minorities can access and take advantage of policies to learn jobs and successfully start a business is another matter entirely. Due to the specificity of the current ethnic policy system located in many different ministries, branches and fields, for policies to really become a resource and engine to promote successful start-ups in ethnic minority areas. It is necessary to there must be effective connection and coordination of many ministries and branches. Along with that, before training the functional sector as well as the locality, it is necessary to redefine the nature of entrepreneurship and redefine the role of entrepreneurship in this particular area. Entrepreneurship in this area, besides creating jobs, reducing poverty and developing the economy, also comes with the goal of preserving cultural diversity and supporting the integration of ethnic groups into the flow of startups general industry of the country. Only in this way can they encourage people to learn a trade and live by it.

In addition, the annual budget allocated by the central government for the Vocational Training Scheme for rural workers is very low, while the operating mechanism for allocation of funds is constantly changing. In 2012, the funding was directly allocated for vocational training institutions; in 2013 assigned to the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs as an investor. In 2014 – 2015, assigned to the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs as the investor in non-agricultural vocational training, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development as the investor in agricultural vocational training. In 2016, vocational training capital was integrated into the NTM program, assigned to the grassroots level to decide for themselves, but there were no specific instructions, so it was difficult to apply. New rural capital is spent on many contents, while the annual allocation is limited, the third grade

communes get more than 80 million dong, the second class commune more than 100 million dong, the special difficult commune gets 335 million dong. Therefore, although the district government has asked the communes based on the actual situation to actively allocate and allocate capital for vocational training, but beyond the deadline, no commune-level government has register to participate.

In addition, policies and support for job search, post-training loan guidance and sales of grassroots products have not yet been given due attention. This is a very necessary issue and must be studied and implemented carefully. Because it will directly affect the results of the current implementation of policies on vocational training for ethnic minorities. If only focusing on input and training work, but not focusing on output results as well as creating suitable jobs so that trained people have the opportunity to work and apply their learned knowledge as well as if you want to create a stable income from work, training support will not make any sense.

## **PROPOSED SOLUTIONS**

### ***Change in vocational training and support policies for ethnic minority communities***

Although there have been many efforts to improve gender inequality in Vietnam, this problem still exists and affects especially ethnic minority communities. More specific programs are needed to target ethnic minority women. For example, related to land, measures should be taken to help improve the initiative and confidence of ethnic minority women. As another example, in order to increase access to reproductive health and health services, education and other services need to be provided in an accessible format, especially in terms of language because most people ethnic minorities do not speak Vietnamese, and EM women have lower literacy rates than men.

Among 116 policies related to policies for ethnic minorities, there are seven policies to support ethnic minority and mountainous youth to learn vocational skills and improve their training levels from fostering, primary and intermediate level. Therefore, in the immediate future, it is necessary to well implement these seven policies, contributing to creating jobs for ethnic youth, the main force in each ethnic minority family. Localities need to actively develop training plans that are close to reality and the vocational training needs of each part of the population. Vocational training courses and classes need to be longer, and the program requirements are



lower, in accordance with the educational level as well as the psychology of the students. At the same time, promote counseling so that students can clearly see the benefits of vocational training. In order to solve the shortcomings and problems in vocational training, experts say that authorities at all levels need to support workers to change careers. After students graduate from school, the Department of Labor - Invalids and Social Affairs needs to closely monitor and support students in order to support, advise, and recommend students to find jobs in the right industry. There is a preferential loan mechanism or vocational training associated with job creation. In addition, localities need to focus on labor export policies for particularly difficult areas, contributing to creating long-term jobs.

### ***Changing the structure of training professions***

Before vocational training for ethnic minorities, it is necessary to have needs surveys before vocational training for ethnic minority workers to be able to determine the structure of occupations and the level of training and investment in the grassroots materials, allocate budget for training in a reasonable way.

In the current industrialization period, the state needs to have policies to encourage investors to open production factories in areas where ethnic minorities live so that they can directly consume products agricultural and forestry products as raw materials for commodity processing. At the same time, it is necessary to open vocational training institutions in the places where the minority co-presidents live, to train them with skills and industrial working styles associated with the industries that factories, companies will be available in that area.

### ***Develop infrastructure and facilities as well as encourage qualified teachers to teach and train ethnic minorities.***

Currently, besides developing occupations in the fields of agriculture, forestry and industry, the service sector plays a very important role in the economy. Therefore, when providing vocational training for ethnic minorities, it is also necessary to focus on training the necessary skills and knowledge so that ethnic minorities can develop services such as tourism services, restaurants, hotel, culture and art, etc.

### ***Building new production and business models towards sustainable development***

Establish cooperatives, cooperative groups and businesses to gather ethnic minority workers to develop professionally and towards sustainable development. Since then, professional

production and labor skills training for ethnic minorities will become more practical, training associated with job creation and professional practice for ethnic minority workers.

Developing models of eco-tourism, craft village tourism, new rural development and accompanying development services such as hotels, restaurants, theater performances of traditional art forms of ethnic minorities. The mountainous, highland and coastal provinces of our country are blessed by nature with charming scenery, with many regional specialties. This is a great advantage for our country to develop tourism services, especially ecotourism. When Vietnam is on the road When entering and opening the door to welcome tourists from all over the world, creating favorable conditions for ethnic minorities to have the opportunity to develop their economy in their own land is essential and necessary. Currently, many young people in the delta have gone to the highlands, guiding ethnic minorities to make Homestay (the model of tourists renting houses of indigenous people, living with them, participating in daily activities with the host), developing eco-tourism. Many social enterprises have been established to support this business model, to teach foreign languages and communication skills to ethnic minorities so that they can communicate well and introduce their culture to the foreign visitors. In the near future, the state from the central to local levels will need to do better in supporting ethnic minorities as well as businesses to develop new models of economic development in a sustainable way where ethnic minorities live.

## **CONCLUSION**

In brief, vocational training for ethnic minorities in Vietnam has been paid great attention by the state from the central and local levels. Therefore, the work of vocational training for ethnic minorities in recent years has achieved many remarkable results. However, besides the achievements, there are still many limitations. In order to continue to support ethnic minorities to receive vocational training more effectively in the next periods, especially in the period of 2021-2030, the state needs to have more practical policies, combining public-private investment project in collaboration with businesses and local people in ethnic minority areas.

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