

Research on the Labour and Employment of Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam

Trinh Thi Thanh Thuy^a, Doan Thi Mai Huong^{b*}, Mai Thanh Lan^c, Le Huy Khoi^d, ^{a,d}Vietnam Institute of Industrial and Trade Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Industry and Trade, 17 Yet Kieu road, Hai Ba Trung district, Hanoi, Vietnam, ^bUniversity of Labour and Social Affairs, 43 Tran Duy Hung road, Cau Giay district, Hanoi, Vietnam, ^cThuongmai University, 79 Ho Tung Mau road, Cau Giay district, Hanoi, Vietnam, Email: ^{b*}huongdoanthimai@yahoo.com

In recent years, the party and state of Vietnam has always considered issues of ethnicity; ethnic work; solidarity among ethnic groups; and especially, the ethnic minorities' employment, as key and basic tasks towards an important strategic position in the revolutionary cause of the country. However, during the implementation process, aside from achieving positive results, there were still numerous limitations and difficulties. The ethnic minorities' labour, and employment, as well as the underdeveloped labour market in Vietnam, pose urgent issues that need to be addressed and tackled in the short, and long terms. This research inherits the work of previous studies, which were based on collected data and expert interview results from a state level project regarding the 'basic and urgent solutions to develop markets in ethnic minority areas and mountainous regions' in Vietnam. This study analyses and assesses the labour and employment situation of ethnic minorities in Vietnam. From these results, we propose several solutions to improve the quantity and quality of the labour, and employment of ethnic minorities in Vietnam, and in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: *Labour, Employment, Ethnic minorities, Human resources, Vietnam.*

JEL code: E24, F66, J01, J23, J24.



Introduction

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic nation with 54 ethnic groups, in which there are 53 ethnic minorities comprised of approximately 13.4 million people, accounting for 14.6 per cent of the national population. Ethnic minorities reside in a large area, dispersing in all regions of the country, but mainly live in highland, remote, and border areas where there are many difficulties in development. Playing a core role in socio-economic development, especially in security and defence, the party and state always consider the issue of ethnicity and solidarity among ethnic groups as a central and fundamental task, which has an important strategic position in the revolutionary career.

The ethnic policies of Vietnam have been increasingly completed and have made significant contributions to the socio-economic development of ethnic minorities in the whole country. Since the inception of the nation's renovation in 1986, ethnic minorities and mountainous areas have undergone several new development steps, along with the development of the country. The system of development policies for ethnic minorities and mountainous areas is becoming comprehensive and complete from time to time.

Labour, and employment are always primary concerns of society because they are inseparable subjects of the economy, and society. They are the source of indispensable material, and spiritual wealth for social development. Addressing the labour and employment issues of ethnic minorities not only ensures stable socio-economic development, but also ensures the national security and defence.

Labour is one of the important topics and content matter in studies about ethnic minorities and mountainous areas. According to 2015 survey data, there was 8.08 million ethnic minority members in Vietnam who were aged 15 and over, and had jobs, accounting for 15.29 per cent of the nationwide population aged 15 and above.

Therefore, research on the labour, and employment of ethnic minorities in Vietnam is always necessary and of scientific significance.

Literature Review

Studies in the field of labour, and employment in ethnic minorities and mountainous areas mainly focusses on improving the capacity of state management officials, developing education, and ensuring workers' rights, as identified in the following research studies.

Le et al. (2008)

Le et al. (2008) analyse the characteristics of labour in Vietnam and the impact of this labour force in the ethnic minority areas within the Northern uplands, and in the locally renewal cause. On that basis, the author proposes basic directions and solutions to promote the role of the key cadres of the labour force in the northern mountainous ethnic minority areas, in Vietnam.

Lo (2009)

Lo (2009) studied the theoretical issues, and practical development of ethnic minority staff in the northern mountainous provinces of Vietnam. The results of the study showed that the directions for development of ethnic minority cadres in the northern mountainous provinces includes two key factors. Firstly, developing ethnic minority cadres associated with the task of the socio-economic development of the Northern mountainous society. Secondly, the task of developing ethnic minority cadres must focus on quantity, quality, and reasonable structure. Based on the research results, the author proposed a number of solutions to develop ethnic minority cadres to meet the requirements of innovation in the Northern mountainous provinces, including: solutions for education and training; solutions for planning, and managing ethnic minority staff resources; and solutions on mechanisms, policies, and laws for developing ethnic minority cadres.

Hasmath et al. (2012)

Hasmath et al. (2012) analysed that the disparity of wages between ethnic minorities, and Han Chinese in China from 1989–2006 has created labour market instability and disadvantage for ethnic minority groups, and some inadequacies of government policies create discrimination against ethnic minorities. From there, the authors issue recommendations to the Government to improve wages for ethnic minorities, contributing to the improvement of the labour market.

Nguyen (2014)

Nguyen (2014) assesses the real situation of human resources in the ethnic minorities, and mountainous areas of Vinh Phuc, Vietnam. The research results show that Vinh Phuc has about 40 mountainous communes in districts, and towns; and the Vinh Phuc Province has 29 ethnic minority groups totaling 43,056 people, and accounting for 4.25 per cent of the provincial population. The proportion of the untrained population at a working age in these regions is much higher than that of the provincial average. The population of the working age

group which has been trained is mostly at the primary and intermediate levels, while employees trained at the tertiary level, and colleges accounts for a low proportion.

Bui (2015)

Bui (2015) studied the theoretical and practical basis for vocational training programs and policies for ethnic minorities, and evaluated the results of the implementation process for ethnic minority labourers. From there, the author proposed opinions, orientations, goals, and seven groups of solutions to improve the effectiveness of vocational training programs and policies for ethnic minorities. This included the solution for state management innovation in organising training programs and policies' implementation for ethnic minorities.

UNDP (2016)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016) collected data to analyse and assess the current situation of human resources in ethnic minority groups, and labour development policies in these areas, including policies on healthcare, boarding school regimes, teacher benefits, vocational training policies, and national poverty reduction policies.

Thus, generally, the above studies mentioned some specific aspects of the ethnic minorities' employment situation. However, there are no adequate studies on the labour and employment of ethnic minorities in Vietnam.

Methodology

The subject of this research is the labour, and employment of ethnic minorities in Vietnam.

In order to clarify the current status, the limitations, and difficulties in the labour, and employment of the ethnic minorities process in Vietnam, the article used methods of analysis, synthesis, and data processing. The research results primarily used secondary data that was collected from reports, books, magazines, statistical yearbooks, and final reports, etc.

Besides, this research used a qualitative research methodology based on several in-depth interviews with five lecturers possessing extensive experiences in labour, and employment from the human resources of the National Economics University, and University of Labour and Social Affairs, Vietnam. These are the two leading universities in Vietnam for training human resources. At the same time, five experts were also interviewed, who are Directors of departments of labour, war invalids, and social affairs within the provinces where many ethnic minorities live.

In addition, this study also conducted surveys on the labour, and employment of ethnic minorities. The survey subjects are ethnic minorities in Vietnam; grassroots cadres doing labour work in localities where many ethnic minorities live.

Based on the above results, and expert interview results, we built survey questionnaires for the purpose of quantitative research (see Table 1).

Table 1: Attributes (indicators) of the labour, and employment of ethnic minorities in Vietnam

Code	Scale
LEEM1	The quality of ethnic minorities' human resources.
LEEM 2	Ethnic minorities' labour is mainly unskilled labour.
LEEM 3	Employment structure is divided by age group.
LEEM 4	Labour market in the agricultural sector in rural areas.
LEEM 5	Labour distribution of ethnic minorities.
LEEM 6	Ethnic minorities escaping from poverty.
LEEM 7	Average salary of ethnic minority laborers.

Research Results and Discussion

The Quality of Ethnic Minorities Human Resources

The quality of ethnic minority human resources both physically, and intellectually remains low. Ethnic minority labourers are mostly unskilled workers whose knowledge, skills, working capacity, and adaptability are still poor. The quality of labour is failing to meet the requirements of economic development, and the training industry structure has many shortcomings. Especially, there is a serious shortage of high-level technical labour, and labour in some novel industries. The rate of trained workers is still low, which can be seen through the fact that skills, physical strength, and industrial working manners are weak, leading to low competitiveness. Local imbalance between labour supply and demand occurs among regions, areas, and economic sectors. While the labour supply is large, there are still many businesses in ethnic minority areas facing difficulties in recruiting workers, and not only trained workers, but also unskilled workers. Besides, there is a slow labour restructuring

speed because workers are mainly working in agriculture, informal sector, and low productivity environments. The economy still relies heavily upon resource exploitation, and labour-intensive industries, such as agricultural, fishery and mining products, primary industrial products, and consuming services intensively using unskilled labours.

Ethnic minority labourers are lacking long-term, and stable orientation. Only about 6.2 per cent of ethnic minority labourers have been trained, which is equal to one third of the national average. Most of them are at an intermediate level, and the percentage of ethnic minority men skilled is higher than that of women (6.4 per cent compared to 5.9 per cent).

Table 2: The proportion of employed people aged 15 and over that has been trained, according to survey data on August 1, 2015.

Explanation	Primary training	Intermediate training	Vocational colleges	Bachelor or above	Total
Male	0.8%	2.8%	1.1%	1.7%	6.4%
Female	0.2%	2.5%	1.4%	1.7%	5.9%
Average	0.5%	2.7%	1.3%	1.7%	6.2%

Source: Survey on the current socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2015.

There is a high differentiation among different ethnic groups. The lowest group has an average rate of less than two per cent, while this index in the highest group has an average rate of over seven per cent. The percentage of trained workers is relatively high in some ethnic groups, such as Pu Peo (16 per cent), Ngai (15 per cent), Bo Y (10.7 per cent), Si La (9.9 per cent), Hoa (9.5 per cent), Ta Oh (nine per cent). Some ethnic groups have almost no trained workers, such as Xtieng, Brau, Array, Ro Mam, Ba Na, Phu La, Raglay, La Hu, and Kho Mu. The percentage of male workers trained is much higher than that of women in Si La, San Diu, Co Tu, Ha Nhi, and Lao ethnic groups (about 3.5–6 per cent). It is noteworthy that the Tay, Lo Lo, Ngai, and Pu Peo groups have a higher percentage of trained women than men, at around three to five per cent.

The technical and professional qualifications of ethnic minorities remains low and is mainly comprised of unskilled workers. The graduation rate at the professional schools of these groups is extremely limited; elementary at 1.07 per cent, intermediate at 2.81 per cent, college at 0.75 per cent, university at 1.08 per cent, and postgraduate at 0.03 per cent. There is a high disparity in the proportion of trained workers among ethnic minorities, with the lowest group having an average of less than two per cent, while the highest rate is seven per cent. The percentage of trained workers is relatively high in some ethnic groups, such as Pu Peo (16 per cent), Ngai (15 per cent), Bo Y (10.7 per cent), Si La (9.9 per cent), Hoa (9.5 per cent), and Ta Oh (nine per cent). Some ethnic groups have almost no trained workers, including Xtieng, Brau, Array, Ro Mam, Ba Na, Phu La, Raglay, La Hu, and Kho Mu.

Despite the abundant labour force, and long working age (from 15–60 years), they are mostly unskilled workers with low educational levels. Ethnic minority workers lack orientation and change slowly. Only about 6.2 per cent of ethnic minority labourers have been trained, which is equal to one third of the national average. Moreover, they are almost at an intermediate level, and male workers have higher skills than women (6.4 per cent versus 5.9 per cent).

Table 3: Labour qualifications of ethnic minorities

Ethnic group	High skilled labourer		Mediocre labourer		Unskilled labourer		Unemployed	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Co Tu	6.46%	3.34%	30.3%	33.67%	61.76%	62.19%	1.49%	0.8%
Khmer	2.26%	2.58%	41.23%	47.4%	53.23%	46.55%	3.28%	3.47%
Xtieeng	0.42%	0.16%	8.51%	24.8%	86.75%	70.79%	4.32%	4.07%
Cham	5.09%	5.48%	35.18%	39.74%	56.32%	50.83%	3.4%	3.95%
Hoa	4.23%	5.13%	51.11%	52.78%	41.71%	39.46%	2.95%	2.63%
Xinh mun	0.21%	0.18%	0.68%	0.21%	99.11%	99.6%	0.29%	0%
Pupee	6.06%	9.3%	6.67%	10.08%	86.67%	79.84%	0.61%	0.78%

Source: Survey on the current socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2015.

The Table 3 shows that unskilled workers account for a very high proportion, particularly in the Xinh mun group, and over 99 per cent of the population are unskilled workers among both men and women. The percentage of female workers is about 0.5 per cent higher than that of male workers, and there is no female unemployment. Because the main distribution area of ethnic minorities is in mountainous, and highland areas, the employment of these groups may be in the form of labourers in the agriculture and forestry areas, without technical requirements. However, the unemployment rate of ethnic minorities is considered to be at the lowest rate (zero per cent). The Co Tu men have the highest occupational skills, accounting for 6.46 per cent, followed by the Pupee, Cham, and Hoa ethnic groups. The gap between men and women is at its largest among the Co Tu ethnic group (male 6.46 per cent, female 3.34 per cent), while in the Pupee group, skilled female workers account for 9.3 per cent, which is higher than males at 6.06 per cent. The highest unemployment rate was recorded in the Xtieeng ethnic group, among both men and women, and the difference between the sexes was not high.

Ethnic Minorities Labour is Mainly Unskilled Labour

The labour of ethnic minorities is mainly unskilled, accounting for 75.4 per cent of the total number of employees, while the rate of unskilled labour of all ethnic groups is 39.9 per cent (socio-economic survey data of 53 ethnic groups in 2015). Moreover, operating machinery and equipment assemblers only accounted for 2.1 per cent, compared to that of ethnic groups

at 8.5 per cent. Meanwhile, craftsmen only accounted for 4.7 per cent, compared to the rate of ethnic groups at 12 per cent. The workers with a high-level technical expertise accounted for nearly one-fourth of all ethnic groups (1.3 per cent compared to 6.5 per cent).

Table 4: The structure of employed labour by occupation

No.	Ethnic group	Leader	High-level technical expertise	Middle-level technical expertise	Staff	Personal services, security guard, sales	Skilled labour in agriculture, forestry, and fishery	Craftsmen and other workers involved	Assembler and operator of machinery and equipment	Simple labour
	All ethnic groups	1.1	6.5	3.2	1.8	16.6	10.4	12.0	8.5	39.9
	Ethnic minorities	0.5	1.3	1.4	0.5	4.2	9.9	4.7	2.1	75.4
1	Hoa	0.6	3.3	2.1	3.2	32.4	5.1	10.9	11.8	30.6
2	Khmer	0.2	1.3	0.9	0.5	9.2	21.8	13.8	4.9	47.4
3	Cham	0.2	3.0	3.2	0.6	12.7	17.5	8.1	3.5	51.2
4	O Đu	0	1.9	0.9	0	0.9	0	0.9	0.9	94.5
5	Brau	0	0	0	0	0	6.9	0	0	93.1
6	Mong	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.3	3.6	0.3	0.1	94.7
7	Hre	0.6	0.5	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.1	1.5	0.7	94.0

Source: Overview of socio-economic status of 53 ethnic minorities in 2015.

The structure of the employed population divided by occupation has a significant gap between ethnic groups. The group that has the largest gap by occupation is the Mong ethnic group, accounting for 94.7 per cent, followed by the Hre group at 94 per cent, and the smallest is the Hoa ethnic group, with a rate of 30.6 per cent.

The ethnic minority group with the highest number of people performing a personal service, and working in protection and sales is the Hoa group, accounting for 32.4 per cent, followed by the Cham people (12.7 per cent), and the Khmer people (9.2 per cent). The proportion of leaders and the high-level technical expertise of the Hoa ethnic group is 0.6 per cent, and 3.3 per cent respectively. This is higher than the rate of the national average of 0.5 per cent, and 1.3 per cent. The Cham group also have a higher proportion of people owning technical, and professional qualifications than the general level of ethnic minorities, at 3.0 per cent, and 3.2 per cent, respectively.

Employment Structure is Divided by Age Group

Employment is concentrated mainly between the ages of 15–54 years, and the distribution of employed people by age among ethnic groups, as well as distribution by gender (with employed males accounting for a higher proportion than females), which are not similar among groups.

Moreover, ethnic minority people tend to go to work early, prolong their working age (from five to 60 and up). The labour participation rate in the age group of 15–24 years accounts for 24.8 per cent compared to the rate of 14.2 per cent of all ethnic groups. The percentage of people over 60 years old participating in the employment market is about six per cent of the total employment of ethnic minorities. The labour force at the age range from 25–55 years accounts for a high proportion (64 per cent) but is lower than that of the whole country (69.8 per cent). The labour force mainly concentrates in the group from 15–54 years, which is in accordance with the labour law. However, the 60 year and above group still accounts for six per cent of workers who have a special job in the Hoa group. This rate is up to eight per cent of the total employed population. The Mong people usually start working earlier. The age group of 15–24 years accounts for 36.6 per cent of employed workers, followed by the ODu people with 34.2 per cent. At the age of 60 and above, this rate of the Mong people is lower than that of the Hoa, and Tay people.

There is a difference in the distribution of employed people by age among the different ethnic groups. The proportion of employees in the working age group from 15–24 years of the Hoa, and Tay ethnic groups account for only 13.8 per cent, and 19.2 per cent, while this age group of the Mong, and ODu peoples occupies over 30 per cent. This difference can also be higher in the group aged 60 years and above. This rate is six per cent of the total of ethnic minority people. Meanwhile, that of the Hoa group is higher at about eight per cent, the ODu ethnic group is only 3.8 per cent, and that rate of the Mong ethnic group is 4.5 per cent.

The employment structure by the age group of several ethnic groups is shown in Table 5, as follows:

Table 5: Employment structure by age group

No.	Ethnic group	Employment structure by age group			
		15–24 years	25–54 years	55–59 years	Over 60
1	Hoa	13.8%	70.4%	7.8%	8.0%
2	Tay	19.2%	68.3%	6.3%	6.2%
3	Mong	36.6%	55.6%	3.3%	4.5%
4	ODu	34.2%	58.2%	3.8%	3.8%
	Average	24.8%	64.0%	5.2%	6.0%

Source: Overview of socio-economic status of 53 ethnic minorities in 2015.

In the field of employment, employed men account for a higher proportion than women, although this difference is not the same among ethnic groups. In the total of 53 ethnic minorities, the employed labour force consists of 52 per cent men, and 48 per cent women. Several ethnic groups have a much higher proportion of employed males than females. Specifically, the rate is headed by the Ngai ethnic group, with a rate of 76.4 per cent being employed male workers. The Hoa ethnic group has a 58.4 per cent rate of male labour. The higher proportion of male workers in these two groups is highly related to cultural factors. These are the ethnic groups in which men play a decisive role in important jobs or activities of the family. In some other ethnic groups, such as the Pu Peo, Co Lao, O Du, Khmer, Tho, Chut, Cho Ro, and Cham peoples, the percentage of male labour is also high, accounting for about 55 per cent. There are several ethnic groups where the proportion of employed women is higher than that of men, but the difference is insignificant. This includes the Ro Mam, Si La, Lo Lo, Gie Trieng, Gia Rai, Cong, Phu La, and Xinh Mun ethnic groups.

There is a big disparity between men and women in employment due to many reasons. Some of these reasons include: gender inequality (male privilege); early marriage problems; and outdated concepts, and perspective about women, such as women have to do housework, take care of their families, and should not learn much. In addition, many ethnic minority women oversee agriculture, and forestry activities. Accordingly, they are unable to attend school, so they have few opportunities to find jobs in the labour market.

Labour Market in the Agricultural Sector in Rural Areas

The surplus labour market in agriculture, and rural areas is with a low labour supply quality, unreasonable distribution, and limited mobility. Meanwhile, labour demand is low in quantity, and there is still a large proportion of workers working in unskilled occupations that do not require technical expertise, such as in slowly developing areas. Although the unemployment rate is quite low, the underemployment rate is quite serious, and two-thirds to three-quarters of jobs are unsustainable, with the risk of becoming a poor employee still high.

The labour force mainly works in the agriculture, forestry, and informal sector, and in low labour productivity. Moreover, the fact of job sharing, and employment sharing is still common. It is heavily influenced by nature with seasonality, and instability, and is affected by many different factors, such as geographic location, education level, ability to access to information of the labour market, supportive policies, and job promotion.

Table 6: The structure of employed labour by economic sector

No.	Ethnic group	Proportion of employees with technical qualifications	The structure of employed labour by economic sector		
			Agriculture, forestry, fisheries	Industry and construction	Services
1	Hoa	9.5%	26.9%	24.1%	49%
2	Khome	3.5%	58.0%	25.0%	17.0%
3	Cham	8.7%	59.9%	16.2%	23.9%
4	ODu	3.8%	94.3%	0.9%	4.5%
5	Brau	0.8%	100%	0%	0%
	Average	6.2%	81.9%	8.6%	9.5%

Source: Overview of socio-economic status of 53 ethnic minorities in 2015.

The employed people of ethnic minorities work mainly in the fields of agriculture, forestry, and fishery, and the proportion accounts for 81 per cent, which is nearly double that of the whole country (44 per cent). Meanwhile, that of industry, and services accounts for a low proportion of 8.6 per cent, and 9.5 per cent, respectively. Particularly, some ethnic groups do not follow the general rule, such as the Hoa ethnic group accounts for 26.9 per cent of the proportion of people working in agriculture, forestry, and fishery. Meanwhile, people working in the service sector accounts for 49 per cent of the Hoa group, which is four times higher than the average of ethnic minorities. This can be explained by the fact that this group of people living near the border area should have trade and merchandise with other countries. The Khmer and Cham groups also have a high rate of people working in the service area, at rates of 17 per cent, and 23.9 per cent, respectively. This group often lives in the central region, and possibly relates to tourism and trade in the Southwest border area. The Brau ethnic groups have only 0.8 per cent of trained workers, and 100 per cent are agricultural, and forestry labourers.

Due to the residence area, and education level, the majority of ethnic minority labourers are unskilled, and involved in the fields of agriculture, and forestry, they have some specific characteristics such as: being greatly affected by nature, which is seasonal, and unstable; low labour skills, and can do simple jobs only; and a lack of stability, and long-term orientation.

Of the total land area in extremely tough communes, ethnic minorities have a high percentage of agricultural and forestry land ownership, but the per capita value of ethnic minorities is low. All products of ethnic minorities mainly rely on forest resources. Once the forest resources are fully exploited, the revenue also decreases. Because of the low educational level, and the forest resources and mountainous agriculture-based employment model, ethnic minority labourers in general, and ethnic minority unskilled workers in particular, have very

low and unstable incomes. When the forest resources in this area are fully exploited, the people move to other areas to continue exploiting, and without new planting procedures to supplement the exploited forest resources. Moreover, the implications of deforestation, forest resources, and the hunting of rare and wild animals has left heavy ecological consequences. On the other hand, some people live on agricultural production, of which the short-term crops are not effective in the area due to the harsh climate, and unstable environment. Therefore, the output of agricultural products gain is small, and has an uncertain economic value.

Besides, there are a few ethnic minority people who have escaped to work in industrial parks, and urban areas. However, this labour force is also a common labour, so their life is not stable either.

Labour Distribution of Ethnic Minorities

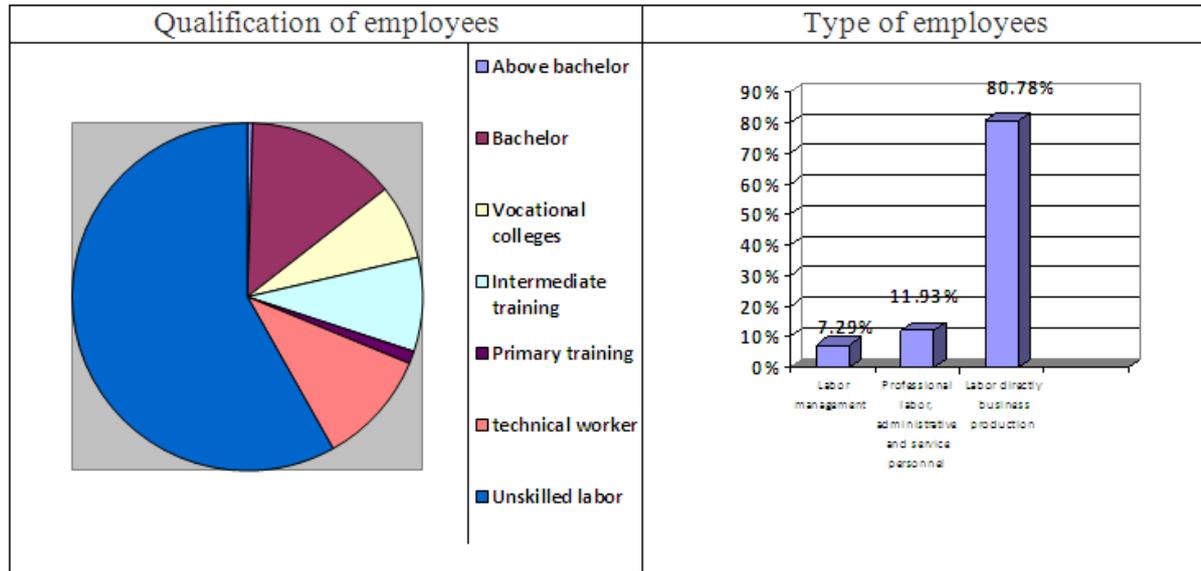
The labour distribution is unreasonable, and mobility is limited. The distribution of ethnic minority labourers is mainly concentrated in the Northern mountainous areas, and the central Highlands, where the regional poverty rate is always the highest in the country. The rate of agricultural and forestry land of the ethnic minorities is high, but the economic efficiency is low, which does not guarantee the life of the people, and leads to negative consequences. As the main distribution area of ethnic minorities is mainly in mountainous, and highland areas, the most effective job creation to improve the living conditions for ethnic minorities is based on development, the protection of forests, and other upland agricultural crops.

In the central highlands region, ethnic minorities have comparative advantages in land and natural resources. In addition, due to cultural characteristics, women in this area are industrious, willing to learn, and participate in projects and programs to support the economic development in the area. Therefore, the implementation of projects to support training in the development of crop production, animal husbandry, and the development of traditional industries, and in association with socio-economic conditions for ethnic minority women, has contributed to help ethnic minority households headed by women in the Dak Nong, Dak Lak, Gia Lai, Kon Tum, Quang Ngai, and Quang Nam provinces in the central highlands, and has positive changes upon the economy.

Ethnic Minorities Escaping from Poverty

There are a few ethnic minorities who have escaped to work in industrial zones, and urban areas. However, this labour force is common, so their life is not stable. According to a survey by the Strategic Institute - Ministry of Industry and Trade, unskilled labour accounted for 90.78 per cent of the total number of employees working in enterprises, in ethnic minority areas.

Chart: Labourers working in enterprises in ethnic minority, and mountainous areas by qualification and type of employees.



Source: Institute of Strategy and Policy Research Institute (VIOIT) - Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2019.

Average Salary of Ethnic Minority Laborers

The average salary of ethnic minority labourers working in enterprises, in ethnic minority areas is quite low, mainly from 3–5 million VND per month.

According to the survey data of the Strategic Institute - Ministry of Industry and Trade, in 2019, the average salary of employees working in enterprises, in ethnic minority areas in the management group was the highest, with an income of 5–8 million VND, accounting for 52.63 per cent. Moreover, the group of professional workers and administrative staff had a salary of 3–8 million dong, divided into two equivalent levels; from 3–5 million dong, accounting for 40.88 per cent; and from 5–8 million, accounting for 40.03 per cent. Production workers had a salary from 5–8 million VND, accounting for the highest rate of 56.14 per cent, and from 3–5 million VND, accounting for 40.82 per cent. The ethnic minority labourers also had the same tendency as workers in the enterprises of ethnic minority areas. The salary from 3–5 million accounted for the highest rate (18.74 per cent), and the salary from 3–8 million VND accounted for 13.53 per cent compared to the total labour of ethnic groups.

Table 7: Average salary of employees working in enterprises in ethnic minorities and mountainous areas up to the present time by type of labour and salary.

<i>Type of labour</i>	<i>Level of salary</i>						<i>Total (people)</i>
	Below 3 million VN dong	From 3–5 million VN dong	From 5 to below 8 million VN dong	From 8 to below 10 million VN dong	From 10 to below 15 million VN dong	15 million and more	
I. Absolute number (persons)							
Total (persons)							5,586
1. Labour managers	5	81	135	104	73	22	420
2. Professional labourers, office administrative staff	28	242	237	71	10	4	592
3. Labourers directly producing	32	1,867	2,568	99	8	0	4,574
Ethnic minority labourers (people)	49	857	619	101	47	14	1,687
II. Structure (%)							
Total (%)	1.16	39.21	52.63	4.91	1.63	0.47	100
1. Labour manager	1.19	19.29	32.14	24.76	17.38	0.39	100
2. Professional labourers, office administrative staff	4.73	40.88	40.03	11.99	1.69	0.07	100
3. Labourers directly producing	1.90	40.82	56.14	2.16	0.17	0.00	100
Ethnic minority labourers	1.07	18.74	13.53	2.21	1.03	0.25	100

Source: Institute of Strategy and Policy Research Institute (VIOIT) - Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2019.

Implications

The education level of labourers is not high, and most people have not completed primary education, as the rate of illiteracy is still high. In addition, the skills are low. It is difficult for EM workers to apply science and technology to production in ethnic minority areas. Workers have not been able to update the application of science and technology to their jobs. In order to solve the problem, in addition to the measure of education on illiteracy eradication, it is necessary to organise classes to supplement qualifications, skills, and scientific and technological applications to ethnic minority people. Although the education level is not high, the ethnic minority unskilled labour force has a high working age, with most having begun work from the age of 5–6 years old. Therefore, the universal guidance on skills in the job will have more immediate applications than the universal education level.

There is a need to strongly shift policies that directly support ‘freely’ to policies that create opportunities for ethnic minorities to escape from poverty and improve their lives. In particular, priority should be given to the following areas: essential infrastructure investment, human resource development, vocational training associated with employment creation,



employment of EM staff, poverty reduction in multi-dimensional approach, and sustainable poverty reduction.

It is important to attach vocational training for ethnic minority labourers, according to the on-the-spot training method. Adjustments are needed to ensure that ethnic minority students who have not graduated from high school can attend school for free tuition before their apprenticeship. Tuition waivers and textbooks and notebooks support, and meals for children result from the fact that most apprentices are major contributors to the family economy, and the opportunity cost of missing out on jobs due to apprenticeship requirements needs to be compensated, so that they can participate in vocational training.

Valuing information on the labour market and developing job introduction centres at the people's committees of communes (wards) is necessary to introduce jobs to ethnic minority people. The cooperation among educational institutions, and other agencies should be strengthened to ensure that information on the labour market is shared, and that schools can provide good advice to students about career options. Research is needed to establish a special university for ethnic minorities to provide intermediate, and higher education for ethnic students.

The consultancy, vocational guidance, and job suggestions for ethnic minority workers have highlighted the inadequacies of this activity. Thus, it is proposed, in the coming years, apart from providing training to improve knowledge for the staff of vocational training centres, these facilities should invest in upgrading equipment. The improvement of knowledge and working conditions at the job placement establishments will help the staff of these institutions to analyse the development trend of the labour market, thereby making reasonable forecasts, recommendations, and advice for job seekers in ethnic minority areas.

Another policy is implementing projects to support training in the development of crop production, animal husbandry, the development of traditional industries, and so on, which are associated with socio-economic conditions for ethnic minority women, contributing to helping ethnic minority families with females being the breadwinners.

The policy of self-employment through the support of social and financial resources to improve livelihoods for highland people, and ethnic minorities must be based on the principle of promoting potential in the location of natural, economic, and social conditions associated with the characteristics of labourers in the region.

More policies to encourage investment, and ethnic minorities are needed because most of the electricity infrastructure, roads, schools, and stations are few here, and do not meet the needs of ethnic minorities, making it difficult to promote the economy of ethnic minority areas. On



the other hand, it is also necessary to have reasonable employment policies of the party, and the state to help ethnic minorities in their area of residence or to integrate into the ethnic minority community in the industrial and urban zones.

Policies should pay more attention to investment and development to exploit the strengths of ethnic minorities, and mountainous areas. Policies to support residential land, and productive land for poor ethnic minorities needs to consider the long-term support required to ensure people's livelihoods. It is necessary to associate ethnic minority laborers with forest protection and development. The residence areas of ethnic minorities are mainly mountainous areas, the central highlands, and the Southwest region, where the weather is different and has a negative impact on the farming of agricultural products. However, each region has special agricultural products with regional and ethnic characteristics. The selection of a number of typical agricultural products of ethnic minorities in that region satisfies the region's weather for development, both bringing high economic benefits, and promoting the national image, linking labour with production areas, such as growing maize on a rocky plateau to produce wine or growing pepper, coffee, and cashews in the central highlands for export purposes.

On one hand, developing and completing policies to encourage investment in ethnic minority areas occurs because most of the electricity infrastructure, roads, schools, and stations are not sufficient enough to meet the needs of the ethnic minorities. It is difficult to promote the economy of ethnic minorities. On the other hand, it is also necessary to have reasonable employment policies of the party, and the state, to help ethnic minorities in their area of residence or to integrate into the ethnic minority community in the industrial zone, industry, and urban zone.

As a consequence of the special characteristics of ethnic minorities with their own customs and practices, the party, and the state require special policies to promote and solve this problem, such as: raising the intellectual level, skills, vocational skills, and policies for ethnic minority people; attaching forest protection and development to ethnic minorities; developing agriculture and forestry sectors in the area of ethnic minorities' attachment to ethnic minorities; and issuing policies to attract investment into infrastructure of ethnic minority areas.

Investment creates the foundation for the birth and stimulation of the development of market types. For areas with underdeveloped economic zones, the self-sufficient economy is still popular, such as mountainous, deep-lying, and remote areas, which must be invested in building a convenient transportation system for goods exchange among regions, and constructing markets or trade centres to exchange and buy and sell goods. In areas where the economy and the market develop mainly in intensive investment (investment in intelligence and modern technical means), service development must be established, forming centres for



channel flow and market orientation (wholesale markets, economic exchanges with foreign countries, commodity exchanges, stock exchanges, training centres, and human resources supply, etc.).

It is also effective to create an environment and conditions for the freedom of production and business, and to diversify ownership and economic sectors. To ensure the freedom of professional practice, according to the provisions of law, the freedom of the circulation of goods, and liberalisation of credit interest rates are integral. Enterprises are free to decide and take the initiative in business. This is a necessary condition for the development of commodity production, creating an important basis for forming and developing market types.

Besides, it is necessary to ensure resources to implement appropriate policies, avoiding a scattered layout. Policies need to ensure better connectivity, such as infrastructure combining economic development, credit policies associated with job creation, and vocational training associated with employment needs. Current socialisation mechanism and the contribution of resources of organizations and businesses contributing to mobilizing the highest resources for poverty reduction and social security in ethnic minority areas.

Institutionalising the party's guidelines and lines into laws and policies, ensuring all activities of buyers, sellers, producers and consumers are carried out within the law and governed by laws. It is a way for ideas to come to life and promote efficiency in practice, ensuring a stable and long-term basis, and creating trust for business and production people. Continuing to have policies to promote investment in the economic development of ethnic minority areas (tax incentives, business registration) is undertaken in order to attract investors to develop economy in ethnic minority areas and regions. The mountain not only attracts jobs, but also guarantees national security and defence.

Developing synchronously policies on markets, commodities, monetary and land finance policies, labour, science and technology, and investment will create synergies to promote the development of the market system.

REFERENCES

- Bui, T. H. (2015). Situation and solutions to improve the effectiveness of vocational training programs and policies for ethnic minority workers. Scientific research projects, Ethnic Minorities Committees, Vietnam.
- Le, Q. T. (2008). Promoting the role of key grassroots cadres in the northern mountainous ethnic minorities in our country today. *Doctoral thesis*, Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics.
- Lo, Q. T. (2009). Development of ethnic minority cadres in the northern mountainous provinces of our country today. *Doctoral thesis*, Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics.
- Nguyen, N. T. (2014). Studying solutions for developing human resources in ethnic minority and mountainous areas of Vinh Phuc province, in order to meet the requirements of socio-economic development by 2020. The Committee for Ethnic Affairs of Vinh Phuc province.
- Hasmath, R., Ho, B., & Liu, E. M. (2012). Ethnic minority disadvantages in China's Labor Market. CGC Discussion Paper Series No.16, University of Oxford.
- UNDP, (2016). Situation of ethnic minority human resources and recommendations for human resource development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, EMPCD project - supporting project for building capacity. Implementation, and Monitoring Ethnic Policy, Ethnic Committee, Vietnam.
- Le, X. B., Nguyen, T. K.D., & Tran, H. H. (2003) Some issues on labor market development in Vietnam. *Science and Technology Publishing House*. 2, 147-156