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The Right to Vocational Training for Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam: Legal Implementation and Comparative Perspectives in the Context of Sustainable Development*

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Abstract
This article examines the right to vocational training and its implementation for ethnic minorities in Vietnam in the context of sustainable development. Drawing on the Rights-Based Approach (RBA) as the primary analytical framework, the study argues that vocational training should be understood not merely as an economic instrument but as a legal obligation of the State to ensure social equity. Through doctrinal legal analysis and an examination of implementation practices, the article evaluates Vietnam's current legal framework and identifies a significant shift from a charity-based model towards an empowerment-oriented approach that enhances the autonomy of ethnic minority communities. Despite notable achievements in policy coverage, the implementation process continues to face limitations, particularly in terms of institutional coordination and adaptability to the digital economy. By examining comparative experiences from Australia, Canada, and China, the study highlights key lessons, including the adoption of embedded training models, the recognition of community self-determination, and the development of comprehensive support systems. Methodologically, the research employs doctrinal analysis, secondary data review, comparative analysis, and synthesis. Based on these findings, the article proposes a set of legal and policy recommendations, with particular emphasis on institutionalizing delegation mechanisms and differentiating target groups in vocational training policies. These measures aim to transform vocational training into an effective tool that enables ethnic minorities to actively integrate and achieve sustainable development.

Keywords: Vocational Training; Ethnic Minorities; Rights-Based Approach (RBA); Sustainable Development; Vietnam

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A. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic country comprising 54 ethnic groups, of which ethnic minorities account for approximately 14.7% of the population (Central Steering Committee for the Population and Housing Census, 2019, p. 4). Due to specific natural and geographical conditions, ethnic minority and mountainous areas continue to face significant challenges, including persistent poverty (Duong, 2023), limited access to formal vocational training (Vu & Tran, 2025), and a lack of specialized skills necessary for socio-economic integration and sustainable development.

In the context of international integration and the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), vocational training has evolved from a supplementary labor market instrument into a core pillar of human rights and social equity. Accordingly, within the United Nations 2030 Agenda, vocational education is emphasized as a key means of promoting social justice (United Nations, n.d.), particularly for vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities (United Nations, n.d.). This shift is clearly reflected in the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where vocational training has been increasingly incorporated as a central objective across multiple development targets.

Although Vietnam's legal system has made significant progress in internalizing international standards, practical implementation continues to encounter structural and coordination-related challenges. This article therefore focuses on analyzing the current state of the implementation of the right to vocational training for ethnic minorities in Vietnam, while also drawing comparative insights from the experiences of Australia, Canada, and China.

Literature Review

A considerable body of scholarship has examined the right to vocational training and its implementation for ethnic minorities, addressing several aspects relevant to the present study. From a development-oriented perspective, numerous studies highlight the role of vocational training in enhancing human capital, improving labor productivity, and promoting sustainable economic growth in disadvantaged regions (Thapa & Singh, 2019; Vu & Tran, 2025). Empirical studies in Vietnam further demonstrate that vocational training contributes significantly to poverty reduction and the improvement of livelihoods among ethnic minority populations. However, persistent challenges remain, including limited access, resource constraints, and regional disparities (Duong, 2023; Kim, 2024).

From a human rights-based perspective, vocational training is conceptualized as a fundamental right, closely linked to the principles of equity and inclusiveness. International frameworks, particularly those developed by the United Nations, affirm the indivisibility of economic, social, and cultural rights and emphasize the State's responsibility to ensure access to education for vulnerable groups (United Nations, 1993; ActionAid). Comparative studies on vocational training in countries such as Australia, Canada, and China further demonstrate the effectiveness of culturally responsive training programs, institutional coordination, and targeted policy support for indigenous and ethnic minority communities (Qian, 2013; Reddy, 2024).

Despite these contributions, existing research reveals several gaps. First, there is a lack of integration among development, human rights, and capability approaches within a unified analytical framework. Second, the legal dimension—particularly the domestic incorporation of the right to vocational training and the mechanisms for its enforcement for ethnic minorities—remains insufficiently explored. Third, there is a shortage of studies linking theoretical frameworks with policy implementation in Vietnam in the context of sustainable development. Against this backdrop, this article seeks to develop a rights-based analytical framework, clarify the State's obligations in ensuring the right to vocational training for ethnic minorities, and propose directions for improving legal and policy frameworks in line with sustainable development objectives.

B. METHODS

This article employs a combination of research methods to ensure the comprehensiveness and reliability of its findings. First, a secondary data review is conducted to collect and analyze both domestic and international sources related to vocational training and the rights of ethnic minorities. Building on this foundation, analytical methods are applied to examine both theoretical and practical dimensions of the issue. In addition, a comparative approach is used to contrast international experiences with the Vietnamese context. Finally, a synthesis method is employed to systematize the findings, thereby informing recommendations for improving legal and policy frameworks.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Theoretical Framework

The right to vocational training can be examined through several theoretical frameworks, including Human Capital Theory (HCT), the Rights-

Based Approach (RBA) (Thapa & Singh, 2019, pp. 17-20), and the Capability Approach. Each of these perspectives offers a distinct understanding of the role of education and vocational training in human and social development. HCT conceptualizes education and training as investments aimed at enhancing labor productivity, thereby contributing to economic growth and income improvement. Within this framework, individuals are primarily viewed as economic resources serving development objectives. As such, it tends to prioritize economic efficiency and does not fully capture the intrinsic value of individuals as rights-holders.

In contrast, the Capability Approach places individuals at the center of development and views vocational training as a means of expanding human capabilities and freedoms. It emphasizes multidimensional development—including economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions—and highlights quality of life and individual autonomy. However, due to its strong philosophical orientation, this approach faces challenges in being translated into concrete legal obligations for State implementation.

Compared to these approaches, the Rights-Based Approach (RBA) is considered more suitable for legal incorporation and practical implementation. RBA shifts the perspective from "needs" to "rights," whereby vocational training is no longer viewed as discretionary support or policy intervention, but rather as a fundamental right recognized and guaranteed by law. This shift imposes clear obligations on the State to respect, protect, and fulfill this right.

The emergence of RBA is not the result of a single event but rather a gradual transformation in development thinking. Prior to the 1990s, economic development, infrastructure, and legal-political dimensions were often treated as separate domains. However, practical experience revealed that charity-based models (ActionAid, n.d.) only addressed immediate needs without tackling the root causes of poverty and inequality, and in some cases even fostered dependency.

A significant turning point was the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (United Nations, 1993), which affirmed the indivisibility of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, and emphasized the role of education in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Subsequently, in 1997, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for the integration of human rights across all pillars of the United Nations' activities (Annan, 1997). This perspective was further reinforced in the "Common Understanding" adopted by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG),

which emphasizes the application of a rights-based approach in development cooperation (United Nations, n.d.).

One of the core elements of RBA is the clear identification of two categories of actors: rights-holders and duty-bearers, alongside the establishment of accountability mechanisms when rights are not fulfilled. Furthermore, RBA requires the transformation of power structures to remove barriers that prevent certain groups—such as women, ethnic minorities, and other vulnerable populations—from fully accessing their rights. As such, RBA embodies a high degree of inclusiveness, aiming to ensure substantive equality and social justice. Based on the foregoing analysis, it can be concluded that the Rights-Based Approach provides the most appropriate theoretical framework for examining the right to vocational training, given its capacity to be translated into concrete legal norms and effective enforcement mechanisms, while ensuring equity and inclusiveness in development.

2. Overview of Vocational Training, Ethnic Minorities, and Sustainable Development in Vietnam

Vocational training is not merely an abstract academic concept but evolves to respond to the demands of socio-economic development. Various definitions of vocational education and training have been proposed. For instance, definitions provided by Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway (Iceland Liechtenstein Norway, n.d.), as well as by Tom Karmel, distinguish vocational training from higher education in terms of pedagogical traditions and funding mechanisms. In the Australian context, higher education is typically associated with accredited academic programs and funded by the federal government, whereas vocational training operates under the Australian Qualifications Framework, is financed through public funding at the state level, and is competency-based, aligning training with industry needs (Karmel, 2011). Similarly, in Northern Ireland, vocational education and training is defined as "*The wide range of courses/skills that help students to prepare for entering*" (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2008).

The Vocational Qualifications Reforms Programme (VQRP) also elaborates the concept by identifying two aspects: "*to provide learners with knowledge, skills and/or competence directly relevant to work or employment, either within one or more sectors or for specific occupations; and/or "to provide enhanced labour market opportunities for those currently in work or employment*." or the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI), under Article 20 of the 2006 Order,

emphasizes "*a list of courses appearing to the Department to be wholly or mainly general (academic) courses; and a list of courses appearing to the Department to be wholly or mainly applied (professional/technical or vocational) courses*" (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2008).

In Vietnam, the concept of vocational training is formally defined in the Law on Vocational Education (2014) (Law on Vocational Education, 2014), which describes it as a teaching and learning process aimed at equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes necessary to obtain employment, create jobs, or improve occupational qualifications. From these definitions, several common characteristics of vocational training can be identified: (i) it is employment-oriented rather than focused solely on theoretical knowledge; (ii) it is competency-based, emphasizing measurable practical skills; (iii) it is closely aligned with labor market demands; (iv) it has a high degree of applicability; (v) it is flexible and diverse; and (vi) it involves multiple stakeholders, including enterprises, training institutions, and state authorities. Accordingly, vocational education and training can be understood as *an employment-oriented education and training system that equips learners with practical knowledge, skills, and competencies aligned with labor market needs, designed to be flexible and application-oriented, and involving close collaboration among socio-economic actors to support individuals' participation and advancement in the labor market*.

The concept of "ethnic minority" is also defined in various ways. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, it refers to a group of people with shared cultural, linguistic, or historical characteristics living in a country where the majority belongs to a different ethnic group (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Similarly, the Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines it as a group of people from a particular culture or race residing in a country where the dominant group differs (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, n.d.). The Collins Dictionary emphasizes the quantitative aspect, defining an ethnic minority as a group that constitutes less than half of the population in a given region or state (Collins Dictionary, n.d.).

In Vietnam, the concept of ethnic minority is legally defined in Decree No. 05/2011/ND-CP on Ethnic Affairs (Decree No. 05/2011/ND-CP, 2011) as ethnic groups with a smaller population compared to the majority ethnic group within the territory of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Based on these definitions, ethnic minorities can be identified not only by numerical factors but also by cultural, social, and political characteristics. Specifically, they are groups that: (i) possess distinct cultural identities and social characteristics; (ii) reside within a specific national or regional context; and (iii) represent a smaller proportion of the population compared to the majority group. Accordingly, ethnic minorities

may be understood as *groups with distinct cultural, linguistic, historical, or social identities, living within a state where the majority belongs to a different cultural or ethnic background, and constituting a smaller share of the population*.

With regard to sustainable development, the Vietnamese Government has proactively incorporated this objective into its national development agenda and established a clear implementation roadmap. This is reflected in Decision No. 622/QD-TTg dated May 10, 2017, promulgating the National Action Plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Decision No. 622/QD-TTg, 2017), and Decision No. 841/QD-TTg dated July 14, 2023, setting out the roadmap for implementing Vietnam's Sustainable Development Goals up to 2030 (Decision No. 841/QD-TTg, 2023). These policy instruments emphasize the need to harmonize economic growth with social development and environmental protection, proactively respond to climate change, and ensure national defense, security, social order, and the safeguarding of national independence and sovereignty.

3. Current Legal Framework on the Right to Vocational Training and its Implementation for Ethnic Minorities towards Sustainable Development

As of 2026, Vietnam's legal framework has formally shifted from a charity-based approach to an empowerment-oriented approach in ensuring the right to vocational training for ethnic minorities. The current system of legal documents reflects policies, guidelines, and regulations related to the right to vocational training and its implementation for ethnic minorities, including: Resolution No. 88/2019/QH14 dated November 18, 2019, of the National Assembly approving the master plan for socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas for the period 2021–2030 (hereinafter referred to as Resolution No. 88/2019) (Resolution No. 88/2019/QH14, 2019); Decision No. 1719/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister approving the National Target Program for socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas for the period 2021–2030, Phase I (2021–2025) (hereinafter referred to as Decision No. 1719/QD-TTg) (Decision No. 1719/QD-TTg, 2021); Conclusion No. 91-KL/TW dated August 12, 2024, of the Politburo on continuing the implementation of Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW dated November 4, 2013, of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party on "*fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training to meet the requirements of industrialization and modernization in the context of a socialist-oriented market economy and international integration*" (hereinafter referred to as Conclusion No. 91-KL/TW) (Conclusion No. 91-KL/TW, 2024);

Resolution No. 71-NQ/TW dated August 22, 2025, of the Politburo on breakthroughs in education and training development (hereinafter referred to as Resolution No. 71-NQ/TW) (Resolution No. 71-NQ/TW, 2025); Resolution No. 281/NQ-CP dated September 15, 2025, of the Government promulgating the Government's Action Program for the implementation of Resolution No. 71-NQ/TW (hereinafter referred to as Resolution No. 281/NQ-CP) (Resolution No. 281/NQ-CP, 2025); Decision No. 1657/QD-TTg dated December 30, 2022, of the Prime Minister issuing the action plan for the implementation of the Ethnic Affairs Strategy for the period 2021–2030, with a vision to 2045 (hereinafter referred to as Decision No. 1657/QD-TTg) (Decision No. 1657/QD-TTg, 2022); Decision No. 1705/QD-TTg dated December 31, 2024, of the Prime Minister approving the Education Development Strategy to 2030, with a vision to 2045 (hereinafter referred to as Decision No. 1705/QD-TTg) (Decision No. 1705/QD-TTg, 2024); and Decision No. 2776/QD-TTg dated December 24, 2025, approving the project on "Developing high-quality human resources among ethnic minorities in key sectors and fields for the period 2026–2035, with a vision to 2045" (hereinafter referred to as Decision No. 2776/QD-TTg) (Decision No. 2776/QD-TTg, 2025). This transformation is clearly reflected in the following aspects:

First, at the macro level, Vietnam has established a comprehensive policy framework and strategic orientation. Vocational training for ethnic minorities is now framed as the development of "high-quality human resources," moving beyond the traditional approach of basic literacy support. The integration of vocational training into the overall socio-economic development plan (as reflected in Resolution No. 88/2019) confirms its central role as a key solution for poverty reduction and addressing structural inequalities. This macro-level orientation demonstrates Vietnam's domestic incorporation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality education) and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth).

Second, at the level of legal regulation, Vietnam has introduced specific provisions on vocational training for ethnic minorities. Decision No. 1705/QD-TTg and Decision No. 2776/QD-TTg clearly emphasize the development of high-quality human resources among ethnic minorities for the period 2026–2035. These regulations prioritize vocational training in key sectors and strategic industries rather than applying uniform approaches. Notably, training is no longer limited to low-skilled occupations but has expanded to include technology and industrial sectors. These developments indicate that Vietnam has aligned its legal framework with international standards, including those

reflected in ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and tribal peoples (ILO, 1989).

Third, at the level of implementation, Vietnam has established mechanisms for enforcement and policy operationalization. Through instruments such as Resolution No. 281/NQ-CP, the Ethnic Affairs Strategy, and Decision No. 1657/QD-TTg, Vietnam has focused on developing governance structures and allocating resources for effective implementation. The adoption of a long-term ethnic affairs strategy with a vision to 2045 reflects a coherent, forward-looking approach and a strong commitment by the State to fulfilling its obligations in ensuring vocational training for ethnic minorities.

Overall, it can be observed that Vietnam's legal framework is being implemented in accordance with a clear roadmap, gradually transitioning from a support-based approach to an empowerment-oriented model. This transformation is consistent with the principles of the Rights-Based Approach (RBA). In this context, vocational training for ethnic minorities has evolved from its initial recognition in Resolution No. 88/2019 to a more adaptive and forward-looking framework, as reflected in Decision No. 2776/QD-TTg, while ensuring accountability mechanisms as provided under Resolution No. 281/NQ-CP.

4. Practical Implementation of the Right to Vocational Training for Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam

In the past five years, vocational training for ethnic minorities in Vietnam has been implemented primarily under Project 5.3, which aims to expand scale, improve quality and effectiveness of vocational education, promote structural transformation of the labor force and the economy, generate employment, increase income for workers, and meet the development needs of ethnic minority and mountainous areas (Kim, 2024). During the period 2021–2025, Vietnam implemented 2,354 vocational training models, with nearly 240,000 ethnic minority workers participating in training programs, and approximately 140,000 individuals receiving career counseling and job placement support. One notable achievement has been the emergence of cooperative models linking vocational education institutions with enterprises and cooperatives (DH, 2025).

Several localities with large ethnic minority populations have recorded significant results. For instance, in Thai Nguyen province—a northern mountainous province—vocational training was provided to 262,603 individuals out of a total ethnic minority population of 452,302 during the period 2021–2025

(DH, 2025), representing 58.06% coverage. In Nghe An province, 14,090 individuals in ethnic minority and mountainous areas received vocational training in 2025, contributing to a 3% reduction in the regional poverty rate.

Another example is Kon Braih commune in Quang Ngai province, where ethnic minorities account for 11,065 out of a total population of 18,260. Vocational training activities are conducted through the Kon Ray Vocational Education and Continuing Education Center in coordination with licensed vocational training institutions in the province. From 2021 to 2025, the commune organized 12 agricultural training courses with 420 participants and 7 non-agricultural training courses with 245 participants (Kon Braih Commune People's Committee, 2026). These training programs are funded under the National Target Program for socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

The practical implementation of the right to vocational training for ethnic minorities reveals several key observations.

First, positive outcomes have been achieved. These include: (i) broad coverage of vocational training programs, with initiatives under the National Target Program (Decision No. 1719/QD-TTg) reaching even remote areas; (ii) relatively high completion rates and effective application of acquired skills in production and business activities; and (iii) the integration of vocational training with the preservation of cultural values.

Second, several limitations remain. These include: (i) insufficient coordination and weak linkages in policy mechanisms, particularly in fostering connections among ethnic minority groups and between ethnic minorities and the Kinh majority; (ii) gaps in policy frameworks addressing emerging fields such as technology, innovation, digital transformation, and private sector development; and (iii) limited availability of preferential credit schemes to support sustainable poverty reduction and income generation, which require further strengthening to meet practical demands (Ministry of National Defence, 2025).

5. Experiences from Selected Countries on Legal Regulations and the Implementation of the Right to Vocational Training for Ethnic Minorities, and Implications for Vietnam towards Sustainable Development

The experience of Australia

In Australia, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is considered a key policy instrument that clearly sets out specific targets for education and

employment outcomes for Indigenous peoples up to 2031 (Australian Government, n.d.). At the state level, agreements have been established to position public Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions at the center of the vocational training system, with a particular focus on prioritizing Indigenous populations (Australian Government, 2023). The Australian Government is also in the process of developing a comprehensive policy framework for First Nations peoples, including Aboriginal (Aboriginal Heritage Office, n.d.) and Torres Strait Islander (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.) communities, which is expected to be finalized in 2026. This policy aims to provide an integrated and inclusive approach across the entire education continuum—from early childhood education to primary and secondary education, vocational education and training, higher education, and employment—for Indigenous communities.

In the field of vocational training, Australia has developed several innovative models that have attracted international attention.

The Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTEC) (National Indigenous Australians Agency, n.d.) model operates on a "place into employment first, train later" principle, whereby Indigenous participants are first connected to employment opportunities and subsequently provided with targeted training to meet job-specific requirements.

The Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) (National Indigenous Australians Agency, n.d.) adopts a place-based approach, enabling training programs to be co-designed in alignment with the specific needs, conditions, and priorities of local communities.

The Fee-Free TAFE initiative, implemented during the period 2023–2025, has provided hundreds of thousands of free vocational training places, with Indigenous peoples identified as a priority group. In 2024 alone, 46,476 enrollments were recorded under this initiative, with an additional 25,000 enrollments in fee-free training and skills programs in 2025 (Government of Western Australia, 2025).

A particularly significant initiative is the Real Jobs Program (Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, n.d.), which embodies the principle that the right to training should be closely linked to the right to employment and the right to self-determination. Under this program, the rights-holders are Indigenous communities in remote and disadvantaged areas, while the federal government acts as the funding authority, and the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) is responsible for implementation. Notably, training programs are

designed based on the specific needs identified by local communities themselves, ensuring a high degree of responsiveness and community ownership.

The experience of Canada

Concerning vocational training for Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, Canada is widely regarded as a leading example of implementing the principle of "*self-determination*" for Indigenous communities, including ethnic minority groups, through their own institutions in managing and delivering vocational training.

First, Canada organizes vocational training for Indigenous peoples through agreements between the federal government and Indigenous organizations under the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) (Government of Canada, n.d.) program. This approach aims to empower Indigenous organizations to design and implement training programs tailored to the specific needs of their communities. The program has been in operation in Canada for over two decades. This educational policy is fully aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDRIP) (Government of Canada, n.d.), which emphasizes the principle of self-determination. In addition, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada issued a series of Calls to Action aimed at addressing the legacy of the residential school system, including efforts to eliminate educational disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. In the field of education (Call to Action No. 2) (Government of British Columbia, n.d.), particular emphasis is placed on eliminating funding inequalities, enacting new Indigenous education legislation, and increasing support for early childhood and higher education.

Under the UNDRIP framework, the principle of "*Nothing about us without us*" is affirmed, leading the Canadian government to commit to relinquishing centralized control and transferring authority to Indigenous organizations. As a result, more than 100 Indigenous organizations in Canada are directly responsible for managing public funds allocated for vocational training programs. The effectiveness of this approach has been evaluated from multiple perspectives, including evidence that the transfer of decision-making power to communities has improved employment outcomes. Furthermore, instead of applying a uniform training model, Canada has developed differentiated programs tailored to specific groups, such as First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban or non-affiliated Indigenous populations.

The experience of China

The right to vocational training for ethnic minorities is also a fundamental right of citizens and is implemented through a comprehensive system of

guarantees. In a country with 56 ethnic groups, where the Han majority accounts for over 90% of the population, while the remaining 55 ethnic minority groups constitute nearly 10% and are geographically dispersed, primarily in border regions (Reddy, 2024), issues related to the implementation of vocational training rights for ethnic minorities warrant particular attention due to notable similarities with the Vietnamese context.

From the perspective of the legal framework, China has established a system of laws governing this area. Key legislative instruments include the Regional National Autonomy Law (Regional National Autonomy Law of the People's Republic of China, n.d.), which emphasizes that ethnic autonomous areas are designated for ethnic minorities. Article 37 of this Law highlights the importance of developing education for ethnic minorities, including vocational education, with the objective "*to train specialized people from among all the minority nationalities.*" Another relevant law is the Ethnic Unity and Progress Law (Ethnic Unity and Progress Law of the People's Republic of China, 2026), which underscores the role of national unity in state-building. The primary legal instrument directly regulating vocational training is the Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China (Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 2022), most recently amended in 2022. Article 10 of this Law affirms that "*The state shall adopt measures to support the development of vocational education in old revolutionary base areas, ethnic minority areas, remote areas, and underdeveloped areas*," demonstrating that vocational training in ethnic minority regions is subject to targeted state support and policy measures.

In practice, vocational education for ethnic minorities in China, particularly during its transitional phase, has undergone significant improvements. Notable achievements include the establishment of a comprehensive education system spanning from early childhood to higher education, the expansion of compulsory education programs, a reduction in illiteracy rates, and the promotion of bilingual education (Qian, 2013, pp. 75-82). However, a number of challenges remain. These include shortages of qualified teachers, limited financial resources, slow development, difficulties in student recruitment, persistent traditional mindsets, and the dispersion of training programs across multiple fields without clear specialization. For example, in the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, the proportion of high school students remains as low as 5%, while the completion rate of primary education in rural areas is below 40% (Li & Ma, 2022).

Several vocational training models in China offer valuable lessons: The Xinjiang TVET Project, funded and monitored by the World Bank, focuses on

improving skills among ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. Vocational institutions collaborate directly with enterprises to identify labor market needs and develop appropriate training curricula and assessment systems (World Bank, n.d.). The Minzu Education Stream model provides preparatory courses aimed at improving proficiency in the national language and foundational skills, thereby reducing educational disparities between mountainous and urban areas (Lhagyal, 2026, pp. 79-97). Additionally, the "Digital + Industry Matrix" model emphasizes the integration of digital technologies into traditional sectors associated with ethnic minorities, such as smart agriculture and digital eco-tourism. This model facilitates the transition from manual labor to technology-enhanced work, including the use of drones and agricultural artificial intelligence (Friends of Socialist China, 2026).

Lessons learned for Vietnam from comparative experiences of selected countries towards sustainable development

Drawing on the experiences of countries such as Australia, Canada, and China, several implications can be identified for Vietnam in improving vocational training for ethnic minorities, as follows:

First, there is a need to shift from a "*support-based*" model to a "*self-determination*" approach, ensuring that ethnic minorities recognize themselves as genuine rights-holders who actively exercise their rights, rather than passive recipients of assistance. In this model, ethnic minorities—through their own organizations and community groups—should be empowered to determine training needs and commission training programs, while the State provides financial support and enabling conditions for implementation.

Second, it is essential to establish a close linkage between training, employment, and cultural factors to ensure both "*cultural safety*" and "*employment commitment*" in vocational training. In particular, enterprises should incorporate cultural coordinators to support ethnic minority workers in adapting to new working environments and production sectors, thereby reducing cultural barriers and transition-related challenges.

Third, vocational training for ethnic minorities should prioritize breakthroughs in the digital economy and emerging production sectors. This includes promoting the adoption of advanced technologies to enhance productivity, support business development, and facilitate participation in digital markets.

Fourth, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive support system to ensure that ethnic minorities not only have financial access to training but also

the practical conditions to participate effectively. This includes providing auxiliary services such as childcare support for ethnic minority women, transportation assistance, and psychological counseling to facilitate adaptation to new environments and challenges.

6. Recommendations for Improving the Legal Framework and Enhancing the Effective Implementation of the Right to Vocational Training for Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam towards Sustainable Development

Recommendations for improving legal regulations on vocational training for ethnic minorities in Vietnam

First, Vietnam should institutionalize mechanisms of delegation and self-determination. Such provisions would enable community-based organizations and cooperatives of ethnic minorities to directly participate in the design and implementation of vocational training programs. This approach would strengthen the self-determination of ethnic minorities as active rights-holders in the exercise of their rights.

Second, the legal framework should clearly differentiate target groups and codify such distinctions in legal provisions. Given the diversity of ethnic minorities across regions, with differing geopolitical and socio-cultural characteristics, tailored regulatory regimes should be developed while maintaining a unified overarching framework. This differentiation would allow policies to more effectively address the specific cultural contexts and labor market conditions of each group, thereby promoting sustainable development.

Third, the law should establish a comprehensive support system by incorporating provisions on financial assistance and accompanying support services. These may include childcare services for ethnic minority women participating in vocational training, as well as psychological support services to facilitate adaptation to new environments.

Recommendations for enhancing the effective implementation of the right to vocational training for ethnic minorities in Vietnam

Concerning implementation measures, Vietnam may prioritize the following solutions:

First, Vietnam can adopt embedded training models and strengthen linkages with employers. Placing ethnic minority trainees in developed economic zones for skill development and exposure to industrial working practices is

particularly important. This approach enables ethnic minorities to better adapt to conditions of economic integration and helps mitigate potential cultural shock.

Second, Vietnam should promote breakthroughs in the digital economy and emerging production sectors. Integrating vocational training for ethnic minorities with e-commerce, the green economy, and high-technology industries would not only facilitate their economic integration but also enable them to effectively promote and disseminate their cultural identity and heritage to global markets.

Third, Vietnam should standardize the language of instruction while ensuring the preservation of cultural identity. Although each ethnic minority group possesses its own language, participation in the broader national and global economy requires a certain level of linguistic standardization. At the same time, preserving and promoting distinct cultural values remains essential, as these constitute important assets that can enhance the visibility and attractiveness of ethnic minority communities.

D. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the transition from a "support-based" model to a Rights-Based Approach (RBA) constitutes a key factor in ensuring the right to vocational training for ethnic minorities in Vietnam towards sustainable development. Drawing on comparative experiences from Australia, Canada, and China, the article demonstrates that the effectiveness of policy lies not only in financial resources but also in mechanisms that promote self-determination, cultural safety, and adaptability to the digital economy. The Vietnamese context indicates that the legal framework is gradually being improved; however, further breakthroughs are required, particularly in institutionalizing community self-determination and developing a comprehensive support system. To ensure that vocational training becomes a genuine tool for empowering human capabilities, the State must assume its role as a duty-bearer, enabling ethnic minorities to transition from passive beneficiaries to active agents in the knowledge-based economy.

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