

HO CHI MINH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF POLICTICS

TRINH THI KIM THOA

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND
MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES OF VIETNAM TODAY**

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Science teacher: 1. Hoang Thi Kim Oanh, Ph.D



2. Hoang Thu Trang, Ph.D



First Reviewer: Assoc. Prof.D Tran Hai Minh

Academy of Jourlanism and Comunication

Second Reviewer: Assoc. Prof.D Tran Dang Sinh

Ha Noi National University of Education

Third Reviewer: Ph.D Dinh Van Thuy

Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics

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INTRODUCTION

1. Reasons for choosing the dissertation topic

Environmental protection in the pursuit of economic development goals has become a major concern for many countries today. This is because the environment constitutes the fundamental basis for both life and economic development in any nation. There exists a dialectical relationship between the environment and economic growth. The environment provides essential resources and conditions necessary for economic development, while economic growth, in turn, creates the prerequisites and material conditions to implement and enhance the effectiveness of environmental protection efforts. However, economic development activities often lead to overexploitation of natural resources and environmental pollution. Therefore, one of the critical challenges facing many countries and regions - particularly those aiming for rapid and sustainable economic growth - is how to promote economic development while simultaneously preserving and protecting the environment.

In Vietnam, after nearly 40 years of *Đổi Mới*, the country has made significant progress in economic development. It has moved beyond the threshold of lower-middle-income status and is striving to reach upper-middle-income levels, with the goal of becoming a modern industrialized nation by 2030. Alongside this robust economic growth, numerous social issues have emerged that require attention - among them, environmental protection within the context of economic development stands out as particularly pressing. Environmental incidents such as the Formosa disaster, tropical storms and flooding, illegal deforestation in Tân Lâm, and the threat of sea level rise due to climate change underscore the complexity and long-term impacts of environmental issues. These problems pose serious risks to human survival and national security. This is no longer merely a warning - it is a tangible and urgent threat that demands concerted efforts to address and mitigate. The ultimate aim is to establish a harmonious and dialectical relationship between economic development and environmental protection.

Fully aware of the importance of environmental protection in economic development, the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam affirmed the following guiding principle: "Placing the protection of the living environment and public health as the highest priority; resolutely eliminating projects that cause environmental pollution; ensuring the quality of the living environment; preserving biodiversity and ecosystems; and building a green, circular, and environmentally friendly economy." Under no circumstances should environmental protection be traded for economic growth.

The Northern Midland and Mountainous Region of Vietnam possesses significant potential for economic development. However, this region also faces numerous challenges, as several localities still exhibit some of the highest poverty rates in the country. This situation stands in stark contrast to

the region's inherent development potential. Therefore, accelerating economic growth has become a central focus in the strategies and policies for this strategically important area. Nonetheless, the intense emphasis on economic development has, in certain localities and instances, led to environmental incidents and pollution, negatively impacting sustainable development at both the local and national levels. Furthermore, the integration of environmental protection within economic development strategies - aimed at promoting rapid and sustainable growth - remains limited and insufficiently articulated.

This reality presents a pressing dilemma for the provinces in the Northern Midland and Mountainous Region, where the need to reconcile economic development goals with environmental protection has become increasingly urgent. Addressing this challenge demands the formulation and implementation of effective solutions to ensure environmental sustainability throughout the economic development process in these provinces.

For these reasons, the doctoral candidate has selected the topic "Environmental Protection in Economic Development in the Northern Midland and Mountainous Provinces of Vietnam Today" as the subject of their doctoral dissertation in philosophy.

2. Research Objectives and Tasks

2.1. Research Objectives

Based on an in-depth examination of theoretical issues and the current state of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam, this dissertation aims to propose solutions to enhance the effectiveness of environmental protection in the economic development process in this region.

2.2. Research Tasks

To achieve the above objective, the dissertation focuses on the following specific tasks:

- Conduct a literature review of relevant research works related to the topic.

Analyze theoretical issues concerning environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam.

- Examine the current state of environmental protection in economic development in this region and identify the underlying causes of existing challenges.

- Propose solutions to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam.

3. Research Subjects and Scope

3.1. Research Subjects

This dissertation focuses on studying the issue of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam.

3.2. Research Scope

- The research space: The dissertation examines the current state of environmental protection in economic development across 14 provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam, as defined by Decision No. 495/QĐ-TTg dated April 20, 2022, issued by the Prime Minister on approving the planning tasks for the region for the period 2021–2030, with a vision toward 2050. These provinces include Lang Son, Cao Bang, Ha Giang, Lao Cai, Lai Chau, Dien Bien, Son La, Thai Nguyen, Bac Giang, Bac Kan, Tuyen Quang, Phu Tho, Yen Bai and Hoa Binh.

- The research content: The thesis focuses on studying the current status of environmental protection content in economic development of subjects that play an important role, directly related to environmental protection issues in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces such as: leaders and managers; businesses and communities.

- The research time: The dissertation examines environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam from 2004 to the present, following the issuance of Resolution No. 37-NQ/TW, which outlines the direction for socio-economic development and national defense-security in the region until 2010. Special attention is given to recent data to ensure the research remains up-to-date and relevant.

4. Theoretical Basis and Research Methodology

4.1. Theoretical Basis

This dissertation is grounded in the theoretical framework of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's ideology, and the viewpoints, guidelines, and policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the State of Vietnam regarding environmental protection, economic development, and the integration of environmental protection into economic growth.

4.2. Research Methodology

Historical and Logical Methods: These methods are employed to analyze and clarify concepts, contents, and approaches to environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam.

Generalization and Abstraction Methods: These methods are used in defining the research subject, and scope, and are applied throughout the dissertation. Their objective is to eliminate isolated and accidental phenomena to identify the essence of the research problem.

Analysis and Synthesis Methods: These methods are used to examine specific research issues. After conducting an analysis, the synthesis method is applied to generalize and systematize the research findings, drawing conclusions and proposing appropriate solutions.

Interdisciplinary Approaches: The dissertation incorporates research methods from other scientific disciplines, such as statistical methods and secondary data analysis. These methods are

applied in Chapters 1 and 3 to synthesize and evaluate the historical research background and the current state of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam.

5. New Contributions of the Dissertation

The dissertation provides a more comprehensive analysis of theoretical issues related to environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam. It particularly focuses on the key aspects of environmental protection in economic development and the factors influencing this process in the region.

Furthermore, the dissertation thoroughly examines both the achievements and the existing challenges in environmental protection efforts within economic development in the studied provinces. It also clarifies the causes behind the current state of environmental management and implementation in economic activities.

The dissertation proposes a set of feasible solutions to enhance the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam.

6. Theoretical and Practical Significance of the Dissertation

Theoretical Significance: The dissertation contributes to expanding and deepening the theoretical framework on environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam.

Practical Significance: The dissertation evaluates the current state of environmental protection activities in economic development in the region, identifies the underlying causes of the existing issues, and proposes viable solutions to improve environmental protection effectiveness.

The research findings serve as a reference for policymakers, providing a scientific basis for formulating policies and implementing concrete actions to enhance environmental protection in economic development within the region.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

Apart from the introduction, conclusion, references, and appendices, the dissertation consists of 4 chapters and 13 sections.

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

1.1. Research on Theoretical Aspects of Environmental Protection in Economic Development

The dissertation provides a comprehensive review of both domestic and international studies on the theoretical aspects of environmental protection in economic development. These studies include scientific research projects, monographs, reference books, doctoral dissertations, and scientific articles that significantly contribute to the academic understanding of this issue.

1.2. Research on the Current State of Environmental Protection in Economic Development in Vietnam in General and in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam in Particular

The dissertation reviews research works related to the current state of environmental protection in economic development in Vietnam, with a special focus on the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region. This includes an overview of relevant scientific research projects, books, dissertations, and scientific articles that provide significant academic insights into this topic.

1.3. Research on Solutions for Environmental Protection in Economic Development in Vietnam in General and in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam in Particular

The dissertation synthesizes studies that propose solutions for improving environmental protection in economic development. These studies, conducted both domestically and internationally, include research projects, monographs, reference books, doctoral dissertations, and scientific articles that contribute valuable recommendations for policy-making and practical implementation in Vietnam, particularly in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region.

1.4. OVERVIEW OF THE VALUE OF THE REVIEWED WORKS AND ISSUES RAISED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1.4.1. Overview of the Value of the Reviewed Works

The above scientific works all have certain theoretical and practical significance. At the same time, these scientific works are important suggestions for graduate students to deploy research on the issues in the dissertation. The scientific value of the works that the dissertation author has absorbed and inherited includes the following contents:

Firstly, the aforementioned studies have addressed fundamental concepts such as the definition, role, and significance of the environment and economic development, elucidating the intricate relationship between humanity, society, and the natural world. Furthermore, these studies have delved into pressing environmental concerns that have garnered global attention, including the looming threat of global warming, the scarcity of freshwater resources for agricultural and industrial production, and the basic human needs, as well as the specter of famine that haunts many regions across the globe.

Therefore, the key to achieving rapid and sustainable socioeconomic development lies in the harmonious integration of economic growth with environmental protection. It is imperative to address the relationship between environmental protection and economic development through a dialectical lens, avoiding the absolutization of economic development goals and the relentless chase for maximum profit at the expense of environmental destruction, resource depletion, and ecological imbalance. However, it is equally crucial to avoid absolutizing environmental protection without acknowledging that economic progress necessitates the rational exploitation of natural resources.

In Vietnam, studies have also highlighted the intricate relationship between environmental protection and economic development during the country's industrialization and modernization process. These studies affirm the Party's commitment to environmental protection in conjunction with rapid and sustainable economic development for the country's sustainable development goals. Some research examines the factors influencing environmental protection in Vietnam's economic development, such as: economic, political, cultural factors; science and technology; awareness of officials, people, entrepreneurs; the socialist-oriented market mechanism and the process of international integration.

Secondly, the above research works, from a certain perspective, have analyzed the current situation of environmental protection in economic development in Vietnam in general, in the provinces of the Northern Midlands and Mountains of Vietnam in particular. The authors analyzed the increasingly alarming situation of environmental pollution in the context of globalization of the world economy. Globalization not only brings opportunities for countries, including Vietnam, but also causes environmental pollution such as pollution of soil, water, air, depletion of mineral resources, ... and the current situation of climate change worldwide.

Studies have calculated the annual damage and production losses caused by environmental pollution for a typical Asian country, which may fall to about 5% of GDP. In Vietnam, during the nearly 40 years of renovation, in addition to the strong development of the economy with increasingly high economic growth rates, the situation of environmental destruction has increased. The situation of surface water pollution in river basins, air pollution, especially dust pollution (PM10, PM2.5), pollution in industrial parks, industrial clusters and craft villages,... is complicated, and environmental quality in many places has severely declined. The authors also believe that the use of high technology can reduce the harmful effects of economic activities on the environment, but it is also difficult to completely overcome the adverse impacts from environmental pollution and climate change on economic sectors, especially in coastal and mountainous areas where forests have been severely depleted.

Research has also identified the causes of environmental pollution and climate change, such as: low public awareness of environmental issues and protection; inadequate environmental management organizations and personnel, as well as insufficient environmental protection laws; the increasing rate and intensity of pollution, environmental degradation, natural disasters, epidemics, climate change, sea level rise, and saline intrusion; and the ineffective and unsustainable exploitation and utilization of water, resources, and land, as well as the inadequate treatment of environmental pollution, particularly air and marine pollution from plastic waste, which has severe impacts on economic, social, and environmental development.

In the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces, research focuses on environmental degradation, particularly the degradation of forests, forest quality, soil, and terrestrial biological

resources, which is increasingly occurring in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; the practice of sustainable environmental protection in economic development, especially the role of payment for forest environmental services in forest protection based on communities in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces. In addition, some studies focus on assessing the development and utilization of forest ecosystem values, the difficulties and obstacles in developing and utilizing forest ecosystem values in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces to exploit the multi-value potential of forest ecosystems, to use forest ecosystems sustainably, and contribute more to the economy.

Based on inheriting the research results of predecessors, the dissertation will delve into the analysis and interpretation to clarify the current situation of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam from the perspective of the contents of environmental protection activities in economic development of leadership and management subjects such as the Party, the State (Ministries, Departments, Branches and local authorities in charge of environmental protection issues), socio-political organizations; businesses, and communities and analyze and clarify the causes of this situation.

Thirdly, a group of research works focuses on solutions for environmental protection in economic development in Vietnam in general and in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam in particular.

These research works, from different approaches, have proposed a number of solutions to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development, such as: a group of solutions related to the use of technology and techniques to protect the environment in economic development; a group of solutions related to education, propaganda of ethics, lifestyle, culture, and tradition to protect the environment in human economic development activities; a group of solutions related to policies and policies on environmental protection in economic development; a group of solutions to raise social responsibility of enterprises for environmental protection in economic development activities. These are valuable suggestive orientations for the dissertation to continue to inherit and develop. However, from reality, it can be seen that no research has been conducted to propose solutions to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces from the perspective of environmental protection activities of leadership and management subjects; businesses and communities. Therefore, in addition to inheriting the existing research results, based on his approach, the author also proposes a number of solutions to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in the process of economic development in the provinces. Northern Midlands and Mountains in the coming time.

1.4.2. Issues to be Further Researched in the Dissertation

The overview of research works related to the dissertation topic shows that no research has deeply analyzed and clarified the theoretical and practical issues of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam today, thereby proposing solutions to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in this region from a philosophical perspective. Therefore, based on inheriting the research results of published works, based on the purposes and tasks set out, the dissertation will continue to delve into the analysis and clarify the following main issues:

In theory: The dissertation clarifies the connotation of the concept of environmental protection; economic development; environmental protection in economic development; environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam - subjects, contents, methods of environmental protection in economic development; and points out the factors affecting environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam today, such as: natural conditions, characteristics of economic, cultural and social development of the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces; The orientation and leadership of the Party, State and local authorities on environmental protection in economic development; the awareness and self-consciousness, proactiveness and positiveness of the subjects towards the issue of environmental protection in economic development.

In practice: The dissertation analyzes and clarifies the current situation of achieved results and limitations of environmental protection activities in economic development (activities to prevent and limit adverse impacts on the environment; activities to respond to environmental incidents, overcome pollution and environmental degradation, improve environmental quality; activities to exploit and use natural resources rationally to ensure environmental protection in economic development) of the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam today. The dissertation also points out the causes of the current situation of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam in the past.

Based on the theoretical and practical basis of research and analysis of the current situation of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces and the causes of the current situation, the dissertation proposes solutions to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam in the coming time.

Chapter 2

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN MIDLAND AND MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES OF VIETNAM TODAY – SOME THEORETICAL ISSUES

2.1. SOME CONCEPTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2.1.1. The concept of Environmental Protection

The concept of environment is understood quite broadly, including not only the physical environment, the natural environment but also the social environment, the economic, political environment, the cultural and social environment, the legal environment, etc. Within the scope of the dissertation, the author only discusses the concept of environment as material factors as defined in the Law on Environmental Protection to correctly implement the research objectives of the dissertation.

The concept of environmental protection is understood as: all human activities aimed at preventing and limiting adverse impacts on the environment; responding to environmental incidents, overcoming pollution and environmental degradation, improving environmental quality; rational exploitation and use of natural resources, biodiversity and responding to climate change.

2.1.2. The concept of Economic Development

The classical Marx - Engels understood economics as the totality of methods and ways that people have used to produce and exchange with each other in each specific historical period.

Regarding the concept of development, according to the views of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, development is a concept used to refer to the process of upward movement from low to high, from incomplete to more complete of things, the result of development is the old disappears, the new is born at a higher, more complete level.

Regarding the concept of economic development, there are many different conceptions. Within the scope of the dissertation, economic development is understood as an upward movement process of the economy, which is the improvement of ways and methods of production and exchange of human products in a certain society.

In Vietnam, when referring to the issue of economic development, in the Party's concept from the renovation to now, it has always affirmed the implication of economic development in Vietnam is sustainable economic development.

2.1.3. The concept of Environmental Protection in Economic Development

Regarding the concept of environmental protection in economic development, there are many different ways of understanding. The founders of Marxism-Leninism, although not directly discussing environmental protection in economic development, discussed the relationship between

humans and nature in the process of human production labor. The views of C. Marx, F. Engels have provided humanity with a theoretical basis to understand the close relationship between humans and the natural living environment, and at the same time help humanity to correctly perceive the importance of protecting the environment in the process of impacting and transforming nature, carrying out labor production activities to serve human needs, and promote economic development.

In recent years, the Communist Party of Vietnam has realized the importance of environmental protection, and has regularly emphasized the need to ensure a close link between implementing economic development goals and environmental protection issues in the entire process of renovating and developing the country.

2.2. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN MIDLAND AND MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES OF VIETNAM – CONCEPT, SUBJECTS, CONTENTS, AND METHODS

2.2.1. The concept of Environmental Protection in Economic Development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains Provinces of Vietnam

The Northern Midlands and Mountains region comprises 14 provinces: Ha Giang, Cao Bang, Lao Cai, Bac Kan, Lang Son, Tuyen Quang, Yen Bai, Thai Nguyen, Phu Tho, Bac Giang, Lai Chau, Dien Bien, Son La, and Hoa Binh.

The Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam have different natural, economic, cultural and social conditions compared to other regions in the country. These characteristics have a certain impact on environmental protection in the economic development of the region. The Northern Midlands and Mountains region is currently the "poor core" of the whole country.

Within the scope of the dissertation, we understand environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces as activities to prevent and limit adverse impacts on the environment; respond to environmental incidents, overcome pollution and environmental degradation, improve environmental quality; rationally exploit and use natural resources in the process of carrying out production and product exchange activities to ensure a harmonious solution between economic development and environmental protection and correctly implement the directives of the Party, State and local authorities on attaching the task of environmental protection in all economic development processes in the provinces of the Northern Midlands and Mountains region.

2.2.2. Subjects of Environmental Protection in Economic Development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains Provinces of Vietnam

In the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces, there are many subjects involved in implementing environmental protection in economic development, but the dissertation only focuses on

the subjects that play an important role and are directly related to the issue of environmental protection in economic development, such as: leadership and management subjects; enterprises and communities.

Leadership and management subjects include the Party, the State (Ministries, Departments, Branches directly directing and managing the field of natural resources and environment; Party committees and local authorities of the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces in charge of environmental protection and resource management); Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations. Leadership and management subjects play a leading role in orienting policies and guidelines for environmental protection in economic development.

Enterprises. Enterprises are the most important subjects, directly carrying out investment, exploitation, and use of natural resources to produce material wealth and goods to serve human life, contributing to promoting economic development of the provinces, and at the same time, they are also the group of subjects that can cause the most damage to the environment from waste discharge activities, causing environmental pollution, and even destroying the environment.

Communities. This force plays an important role in proposing, contributing ideas, and making recommendations in the planning and promulgation of guidelines, policies, laws of the Party, the State, and local regulations on environmental protection in economic development and is also the subject implementing these guidelines, policies, laws, and regulations

2.2.3. The content of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam

Firstly, preventing and limiting adverse impacts on the environment during the implementation of economic activities to ensure a harmonious solution between economic development goals and environmental protection in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

Secondly, responding to environmental incidents, overcoming pollution and environmental degradation, and improving environmental quality during the implementation of economic activities to ensure the goal of promoting economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

Thirdly, rationally exploiting and using natural resources during the implementation of economic activities to promote economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

2.2.4. Methods of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam

One is through the guidelines, policies, and laws on environmental protection in economic development of the Party, the State, and local authorities in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam.

Two is through the proactive and active coordination of actions, especially inspection and supervision of environmental protection activities in economic development between leadership and management agencies, enterprises, and communities.

Three is through the organization and implementation of programs, projects, green economy models, circular economy, and application of advanced science and technology in environmental protection in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam.

2.3. FACTORS AFFECTING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN MIDLAND AND MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES OF VIETNAM TODAY

2.3.1. The orientation and direction of the Party, State, and Local Authorities on Environmental Protection in Economic Development

To ensure that environmental protection is linked to economic development, the most important factor affecting the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces is the orientation, direction, and organization of implementation by the Party, State, and local authorities. Correct orientation and direction will help the implementation of environmental protection in economic development bring the desired results and vice versa.

2.3.2. The awareness and Self-Consciousness, Proactiveness, and Positiveness of Subjects Towards Environmental Protection in Economic Development

The correct awareness of the subjects and the proactive, self-conscious, and positive attitude of the subjects play a very important role, determining the effectiveness of implementing environmental protection in economic development.

In the process of carrying out economic activities of the leading and managing subjects; enterprises, and communities in the Northern Midlands and Mountains region, there is an impact on the natural world. This impact occurs in both positive and negative directions. In a favorable direction, if the leading and managing subjects; enterprises, and communities consciously, actively, and proactively use advanced technologies, with less waste or apply clean science and technology to production, and at the same time set out regulations and sanctions in economic activities to protect the environment. On the contrary, if right from the guidelines and policies on environmental protection in economic development of the leading and managing subjects are wrong, inadequate, and inappropriate, it is impossible to protect the environment effectively, and may even cause the environment to be more seriously destroyed, and therefore the goal of sustainable economic development cannot be achieved.

2.3.3. The Impact of the Level of Science and Technology on Environmental Protection in Economic Development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains Provinces

The level of development of science and technology in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces is still backward, leading to the situation of indiscriminate and wasteful use of natural resources, and the discharge of many toxic substances into the environment still occurs. However, due to the backward technical level, many provinces have little ability to access modern exploitation technology, and many areas in the Northern Midlands and Mountains region still retain their primary forest ecosystems and biodiversity.

2.3.4. Traditions, Lifestyles, and Cultures of Ethnic Communities in the Northern Midland and Mountainous Region of Vietnam

The ethnic communities residing in the Northern Midland and Mountainous Region of Vietnam possess a rich and distinctive cultural heritage. This region is home to 32 ethnic groups, including the Kinh, Dao, Xinh Mun, Muong, Thai, H'Mông, Ha Nhi, among others, who are distributed across various provinces in the area.

The lifestyles, customs, and practices of these ethnic groups are well-adapted to the region's natural conditions and terrain, as exemplified by stilt house architecture and shifting cultivation on upland fields. These cultural traits not only reflect the unique identity of each ethnic group but also contribute positively to local development and environmental stewardship. Traditional customs and community regulations—passed down from generation to generation—serve as informal institutions that govern behaviors related to environmental management, including the construction of sanitation facilities, livestock management, and waste disposal.

However, challenges remain, particularly due to the generally low level of education and limited access to knowledge among some communities. In remote and highland areas, several ethnic groups continue to rely heavily on natural upland farming practices that are largely subsistence-based and self-sufficient, which may hinder integration into more sustainable and modern economic models.

Chapter 3

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN MIDLAND AND MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES OF VIETNAM TODAY – CURRENT SITUATION AND CAUSES

3.1. CURRENT SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN MIDLAND AND MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES OF VIETNAM

This dissertation focuses on evaluating the achievements and limitations of implementing environmental protection measures in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces, including: 1. Preventing and limiting adverse impacts on the environment

during the implementation of economic activities to ensure a harmonious solution between economic development goals and environmental protection in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces; 2. Responding to environmental incidents, overcoming pollution and environmental degradation, and improving environmental quality during the implementation of economic activities to ensure the goal of promoting economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces; 3. Rational exploitation and use of natural resources during the implementation of economic activities to promote economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

3.1.1. Some results of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam today

3.1.1.1. Results of preventing and limiting adverse impacts on the environment during the implementation of economic activities to ensure a harmonious solution between economic development goals and environmental protection in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces

First, many Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces have begun to pay attention to building environmental plans and environmental projects in their socio-economic development plans.

Second, the majority of the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces have initially encouraged businesses to innovate science and technology in production to both modernize the production process, increase labor productivity and prevent and limit the adverse impacts of economic development activities on the environment, contributing to environmental protection.

Third, the majority of the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces have initially implemented the implementation of environmental impact assessment and environmental planning of economic projects right from the time of applying for implementation permits.

Fourth, the government of many provinces in the region and relevant agencies at all levels have initially effectively implemented the inspection, supervision, and examination of enterprises to detect and prevent harmful economic development activities to the environment from the very beginning.

3.1.1.2. Results of implementing activities to respond to environmental incidents, overcome pollution and environmental degradation, and improve environmental quality during the implementation of economic activities to ensure the goal of promoting economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces

First, in recent times, the government of many Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces has paid certain attention to the task of directing and developing plans and measures to proactively respond to environmental incidents, overcome pollution and environmental degradation caused by the consequences of economic activities to ensure a harmonious relationship between economic development and environmental protection for the goal of sustainable economic development.

Second, in the majority of the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces, the inspection,

examination, and handling of violations of environmental pollution in economic development activities have initially been effectively implemented. The inspection of compliance with environmental laws and regulations, pollution monitoring at production plants, hydropower projects, etc. in the provinces has initially been carried out.

Third, many businesses in many provinces in the region have made efforts to apply modern scientific and technological achievements to production to overcome and treat environmental pollution quickly, which normally traditional technology cannot do, serving the goal of ensuring sustainable economic development associated with ecological environmental protection.

Fourth, many Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces are mobilizing forces to participate in activities to respond to environmental incidents, environmental degradation, and improve environmental quality to ensure the goal of economic development associated with environmental protection.

3.1.1.3. Results of implementing activities to rationally exploit and use natural resources during the implementation of economic activities to promote economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

First, many provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains have initially focused on the management and exploitation of natural resources, ensuring environmental protection and ecological balance.

Second, many provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains have initially implemented the transformation of economic production models, innovating the growth model from "brown" to "green", integrating environmental protection goals in economic development.

Third, many provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains have initially applied advanced science and technology in the exploitation and economical use of natural resources, aiming towards the goal of sustainable economic development associated with environmental protection.

Fourth, in many provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains, the inspection and examination of the exploitation and use of natural resources by enterprises to ensure economical, rational, and effective use of resources for sustainable economic development have been implemented and initially achieved many remarkable results.

3.1.2. Some limitations on environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam today

3.1.2.1. Limitations in preventing and limiting adverse impacts on the environment during the implementation of economic activities to ensure a harmonious solution between economic development goals and environmental protection in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

First, although there has been a policy of integrating environmental protection tasks into economic projects, in some localities in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces, the

implementation of this policy is still weak. Economic development planning often focuses on short-term goals, while environmental issues are mainly considered at a secondary level.

Second, although the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces have paid certain attention to encouraging businesses to apply science and technology to production to prevent and limit the adverse impacts of economic activities on the environment, the application of science and technology has not met the requirements.

Third, the assessment of the impact of economic development on the environment of some economic projects in many provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains has not achieved the desired results.

Fourth, the inspection and examination of activities to prevent and limit the adverse impacts of economic development activities on the environment have been carried out, however, this work still has many limitations, leading to economic activities that have negative impacts on the environment, hindering efforts to resolve the harmonious relationship between economy and environmental protection.

3.1.2.2. Limitations in responding to environmental incidents, overcoming pollution and environmental degradation, and improving environmental quality during the implementation of economic activities to ensure the goal of promoting economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

First, although many provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains pay certain attention to the task of developing plans and measures to proactively respond to environmental incidents, overcome pollution and environmental degradation caused by the consequences of economic activities, some provinces have not yet developed plans and measures to proactively respond to environmental incidents.

Second, in some localities, local authorities at all levels are still lax in management, not strict enough, not drastic enough in the inspection, examination, and handling of violations of environmental pollution, making the situation of violations of environmental protection laws still occurring in most provinces, causing difficulties in overcoming pollution, environmental degradation, and improving environmental quality.

Third, the application of modern scientific technologies to treat and overcome environmental incidents and environmental pollution caused by economic activities in some provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains is still limited and inadequate.

Fourth, many provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains face many limitations in mobilizing resources and support from within and outside the country to handle environmental incidents and environmental pollution.

3.1.2.3. Limitations in the rational exploitation and use of natural resources during the implementation of economic activities to promote economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

First, the management and exploitation of natural resources in many provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains still have shortcomings.

Second, the transformation of economic production models, innovation of the growth model from "brown" to "green" associated with the economical, rational, and effective use of natural resources, integrating environmental protection goals in economic development in many provinces in the region still face many obstacles in terms of resources, technology, human resources, and support policies.

Third, many businesses in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces are mostly small and medium-sized, in addition to low financial potential, they do not have enough technological resources and technological innovation in production towards using natural resources economically, especially energy sources.

Fourth, the inspection and examination of natural resource exploitation activities of many enterprises in many provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains still face many limitations. Many violations have not been detected in time or when detected, they are not quickly and effectively handled in accordance with regulations.

3.2. CAUSES OF THE CURRENT SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN MIDLAND AND MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES OF VIETNAM

3.2.1. Causes of environmental protection results in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam today

First, the level of awareness and self-consciousness, proactiveness, and positiveness in environmental protection in economic development of the subjects have been raised.

One is that most of the leading and managing subjects have had a clearer awareness of the need to protect the environment in economic development, and at the same time, there is coordination in implementing environmental protection measures in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains region.

Two is that socio-political organizations, headed by the Vietnam Fatherland Front in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces, have actively promoted propaganda and education to raise awareness of environmental protection in economic development.

Three is that many businesses today have paid attention to the transformation of production structure and technology to limit the negative impacts of economic activities on the natural environment, towards the goal of sustainable economic development associated with environmental protection.

Second, the traditions, culture, and lifestyles of the people in many Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces have many changes in their behavior towards the environment in economic development compared to before.

Third, the economic development process of the region is gradually shifting towards gradually increasing the proportion of industrial and service sectors and gradually reducing the proportion of agricultural, forestry, and fishery sectors, creating resources to better implement environmental goals in economic development.

3.2.2. Causes of limitations in environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam today

First, the awareness, self-consciousness, and positiveness of some subjects on environmental protection in economic development, although gradually improved, are still not complete and do not meet the requirements.

In the awareness and actions of some party committees and local authorities in some provinces in the region, at many times and places, they still value the mindset of economic development, for economic benefits, regardless of environmental trade-offs.

The work of educating, propagating, and mobilizing communities and businesses on environmental protection in economic development, changing production and consumption models towards environmentally friendly ones in many places has not been given due attention. Propaganda on environmental protection laws in economic development is still limited, leading to low compliance with environmental protection laws at enterprises. The level of awareness of environmental protection issues in economic development of a part of the community, especially ethnic minorities in the region, is still low.

Besides, the coordination between subjects in environmental protection activities in economic development, although initially effective, has not met the requirements. Specifically:

One is that the coordination of departments and branches in advising and proposing the implementation of policies and laws on environmental protection in economic development at many times and places in many provinces in the region is not timely.

Two is that some subjects have not yet found an effective way to coordinate with each other. The inspection and examination force on environmental protection in economic development in many Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces is still thin, capacity is still limited; not fully equipped with the necessary equipment and means and not allocated corresponding funds to implement professional activities during the inspection.

Second, the level of awareness and understanding of a part of the people of ethnic minorities in the Northern Mountains about environmental protection in economic development, although gradually improved in recent times, is still at a low level.

Third, the economic resources for environmental protection in economic development in many Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces have not been mobilized to the maximum to keep up with economic development.

Fourth, the guidelines and policies on environmental protection in economic development in some Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces have not been concretized and effectively implemented in practice.

Chapter 4

SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN MIDLAND AND MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES OF VIETNAM

4.1. Promote propaganda and education to raise awareness and sense of responsibility of subjects on environmental protection in economic development

4.1.1. For subjects leading and managing environmental protection

First of all, it is necessary to raise awareness and sense of responsibility of the leading and managing subjects on the issue of environmental protection in economic development. The measures include: 1. Organizing training programs and raising awareness on environmental protection in economic development for leaders and managers, especially the heads of party committees, departments, and branches; 2. Disseminating the Party's guidelines and policies and the State's laws on environmental protection in economic development into Party and government activities, thematic activities, organizing seminars and training courses of departments, branches, agencies, organizations, and units in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces to raise awareness for officials and civil servants on the importance of environmental protection activities in economic development; 3. Building a mechanism for participation so that socio-political organizations can exercise social supervision rights over economic development activities of enterprises.

4.1.2. For businesses

Organizing business communication programs, connecting businesses with local communities to raise awareness of businesses about environmental protection responsibilities.

Strengthening inspection and supervision of business activities.

Organizing working sessions, exchanges, and meetings between local authorities, local management agencies and businesses in the provinces to educate, propagate, and help businesses realize the importance of environmental protection in economic development.

4.1.3. For the community

Organizing communication campaigns through mass media such as radio, newspapers, social networks, local news programs, short films and entertainment programs to raise people's awareness

of the importance of environmental protection and encourage environmental protection actions in economic development of the community. Integrating educational programs on environmental protection, on the importance of environmental protection and the need to properly solve the relationship between environmental protection and economic development at all levels and sectors in the education system in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

4.2. Continue to improve policies and laws on environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces

4.2.1. Continue to improve the general system of policies and laws on environmental protection in economic development

For the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces, the improvement of the system of policies and laws on environmental protection in economic development should focus on implementing the following specific measures:

First, it is necessary to soon promulgate fully and promptly documents guiding the implementation of the 2020 Environmental Protection Law; action plans to implement the Green Growth Strategy, the Circular Economy Development Project, the Program/Strategy to implement the "Zero - carbon" commitment by 2050.

Second, it is necessary to supplement and improve legal provisions on environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

Third, improve and supplement strict sanctions for violations of environmental safety and security in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

Fourth, improve and supplement regulations on inspection, examination and control to ensure that businesses and people comply with regulations on natural resources and environmental protection.

4.2.2. Building, supplementing, and improving policies and laws on incentives, preferential treatment, encouragement, support, and rewards for subjects participating in and effectively implementing environmental protection in economic development

First, the provinces need to issue policies to support businesses to innovate technology, use clean energy, encourage the development of green industry and green agriculture with industry structures, technologies, and equipment that ensure environmentally friendly principles.

Second, building and improving a system of support policies, reducing corporate income tax and reducing credit interest rates to create conditions for businesses to promote the application of scientific, technical and technological advances to production to protect the environment, and at the same time can accumulate a large enough capital to replace "brown" production technology equipment with "green technology".

Third, improving the system of support policies, encouraging businesses in the North Central and Mountainous region to use energy economically and efficiently.

4.3. Strengthening coordination among subjects to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

First, strengthening coordination between management and leadership agencies with communities and businesses in sharing benefits in the exploitation and use of natural resources such as minerals, land, and forests.

Second, strengthening the mechanism of inter-agency and multi-agency coordination between leadership and management agencies in performing the task of environmental protection in economic development.

Third, strengthening close coordination between socio-political organizations headed by the Fatherland Front at all levels with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the provinces, and mass organizations to continue to thoroughly grasp and implement the directives and resolutions of the Party, state policies and laws on environmental protection. Coordinate organization

Fourth, strengthening cooperation between businesses, the government, and communities on environmental protection in economic development.

Fifth, strengthening coordination between the leading and managing subjects, socio-political organizations, and communities to ensure and promote the democratic rights of socio-political organizations and communities on environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

4.4. Strengthening the mobilization of resources to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

4.4.1. Mobilizing domestic and foreign resources for environmental protection in economic development

One is to increase investment in environmental protection funds, ensuring that no less than 1% of local budget revenue is allocated to environmental protection in economic development.

Two is to socialize environmental protection capital through budget channels, government bonds, ODA capital, etc. for economic development, urban infrastructure, and key projects.

Three is to establish a fund to invest in environmental protection projects through contributions from socio-political organizations, communities, businesses, domestic and foreign donors, as well as non-governmental organizations.

Four is that localities in the region need to develop annual plans on environmental protection and allocate budget for implementation to establish a mechanism for rewarding and penalizing with money for environmental protection in economic development.

4.4.2. Strengthening scientific and technological resources for environmental protection in economic development

One is to promote research and application of scientific and technological advances in production to limit and minimize environmental pollution.

Two is to provide new knowledge about environmental protection for management and leadership staff at all levels as well as the business community and the community; applying new technologies and new energy in production and consumption.

Three is to choose the form of technology transfer suitable for the locality and regularly conduct research to summarize models and typical advanced examples of successful application of scientific and technological advances in environmental protection.

Four is to focus on investing in the development of a number of research and technology transfer institutes/centers, especially in agriculture associated with regional universities (Thai Nguyen University, Northwest University) according to the advanced model of the world.

Six is to organize visits and learn from experiences from organizations and individuals inside and outside the locality and region; take advantage of the advice of scientists and functional agencies to acquire modern scientific and technological advances.

Seven is to further expand international cooperation relations in the field of environment.

Eight is to build and complete the environmental database system for synchronous management, storage, and data linking, and at the same time promptly warn about the situation of environmental pollution, environmental degradation and related incidents.

4.4.3. Pay attention to mobilizing resources to improve the quality of human resources to meet the requirements of environmental protection work in the new situation

First, promote propaganda and education to raise awareness and sense of responsibility of subjects in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces on environmental protection in economic development;

Second, continue to improve policies and laws on environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces;

Third, strengthen coordination among subjects to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces;

Fourth, strengthen the mobilization of resources to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces.

CONCLUSION

1.Environmental protection in economic development includes activities to prevent and limit adverse impacts on the environment; respond to environmental incidents, overcome pollution and environmental degradation, improve environmental quality; rationally exploit and use natural resources, biodiversity and respond to climate change during the implementation of production and product exchange activities to promote economic development.

2. Researching the theory of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam, the author has clarified the concepts related to the dissertation such as environmental protection, economic development, environmental protection in economic development, issues related to environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam (subjects, contents, methods of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam).

The dissertation defines environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces as activities to prevent and limit adverse impacts on the environment; respond to environmental incidents, overcome pollution and environmental degradation, improve environmental quality; rationally exploit and use natural resources during the implementation of production and product exchange activities to ensure a harmonious solution between economic development and environmental protection and to correctly implement the directives of the Party, State and local authorities on attaching the task of environmental protection in all economic development processes in the localities of the Northern Midlands and Mountains region. The process of implementing environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains of Vietnam.

3. Researching the current situation of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces of Vietnam, the dissertation explores the achievements and limitations in the work of environmental protection in economic development of the subjects in the following 3 contents: 1. Preventing and limiting adverse impacts on the environment during the implementation of economic activities to ensure a harmonious solution between economic development goals and environmental protection in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces; 2. Responding to environmental incidents, overcoming pollution and environmental degradation, improving environmental quality during the implementation of economic activities to ensure the goal of promoting economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains provinces; 3. Rational exploitation and use of natural resources during the implementation of economic activities to promote economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountains

provinces. The dissertation also points out the causes of the achieved results and the limitations in the process of implementing the contents of environmental protection in economic development in the North Central and Mountainous Vietnam today.

4. Based on the theoretical research and the current state of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam presented in Chapter 3, this dissertation proposes several solutions to enhance environmental protection in this context.

To improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam, the following solutions are recommended: (1) Promote awareness and responsibility: Intensify communication and education to raise awareness and a sense of responsibility among stakeholders regarding environmental protection in economic development; (2) Improve policies and laws: Continue refining policies and laws related to environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region; (3) Enhance inter-stakeholder coordination: Strengthen collaboration among stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the region; (4) Increase resource mobilization: Enhance the mobilization of resources to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection in economic development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam.

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