HO CHI MINH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF POLITICS

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IMPLEMENTATION OF ETHNIC POLICIES IN THE NORTHEASTERN MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES OF VIETNAM TODAY

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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale for the Selection of the Topic

Ethnic issues and ethnic policies occupy a particularly important position in Vietnam's political and social life. In a unified country inhabited by many ethnic groups, addressing ethnic issues appropriately is not only related to socio-economic development and improving the living standards of ethnic minority communities, but is also directly linked to equality among ethnic groups, strengthening the great national unity bloc, maintaining political stability, national defence and security, and national unity. The 2013 Constitution affirms that all ethnic groups are equal, united, respect one another and assist one another in development; the State implements policies for comprehensive development and creates conditions for ethnic minorities to promote their endogenous strengths. Resolution No. 24-NQ/TW and Conclusion No. 65-KL/TW continue to define ethnic issues, ethnic unity and the effective implementation of ethnic policies as fundamental, long-term strategic issues that are also urgent.

From the perspective of Political Science, the central issue is not merely what policies the State promulgates, but also how political viewpoints, objectives and choices are translated into actual outcomes. The implementation of ethnic policies reflects the Party's leadership role, the State's responsibility, the capacity of local authorities, coordination mechanisms within the political system, methods of resource allocation, and the degree of people's participation, benefit and feedback. Therefore, studying ethnic policy implementation makes it possible to examine simultaneously the effectiveness of public governance, the assurance of the lawful rights and interests of ethnic communities, equity in access to development opportunities, and the political and social impacts of policies.

Since 2019, the ethnic policy framework has continued to be refined. Resolution No. 88/2019/QH14, Resolution No. 120/2020/QH14 and Decision No. 1719/QD-TTg have established an important framework for socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas for 2021-2030. The Strategy for Ethnic Affairs for 2021-2030, with a vision to 2045, emphasises comprehensive development, the promotion of endogenous

strengths, narrowing development gaps, and strengthening the political system, national defence and security. Since 1 July 2025, the rearrangement of administrative units and operation of the two-tier local government model have significantly changed the policy implementation environment, particularly in terms of delineating authority, organisational structures, commune-level capacity, data management and coordination mechanisms.

The Northeastern mountainous region holds an important position in economic, political, defence, security and external relations terms; it is also a long-established residential area of many ethnic minority groups. Its fragmented terrain, dispersed population, high proportion of ethnic minority residents and cultural diversity increase the costs and complexity of implementation, while its border location, border gates, natural resources, tourism and regional linkages create distinctive development advantages. Lang Son, Cao Bang and Ha Giang (under the administrative boundaries in force before 1 July 2025) were purposively selected because they share the characteristics of mountainous and border areas, large ethnic minority populations and socio-economic difficulties, while differing in development conditions and connectivity, making them suitable for comparative examination of policy implementation. The former Ha Giang area is now part of Tuyen Quang Province.

Scientifically, numerous studies have examined ethnic policies, ethnic affairs, development in ethnic minority areas, and the implementation of individual programmes and policies. However, there remains a lack of research examining ethnic policy implementation as an integrated political-governance process combining leadership, institutionalisation, decentralisation, coordination, resources, participation, programme and project implementation, inspection and supervision, and beneficiary outcomes. In particular, comparative inter-provincial studies in the mountainous and border areas of the Northeast remain limited. This is the research gap that the dissertation seeks to address.

2. Research Purpose, Tasks, Subject and Scope

The purpose of the research is, on the basis of clarifying theoretical issues concerning the implementation of ethnic policies, to analyse and assess the current situation in the Northeastern mountainous provinces of Vietnam, and

thereby propose viewpoints and solutions to contribute to more effective implementation of ethnic policies in the coming period.

The dissertation undertakes four tasks: (1) reviewing domestic and international studies and identifying findings that can be inherited as well as research gaps; (2) systematising and clarifying the theoretical foundations of ethnic policy implementation from the perspective of Political Science and developing an analytical framework; (3) analysing the characteristics of the research areas and assessing the situation from 2019 to the present, focusing on 2021-2025 and initially updating the context after 1 July 2025; and (4) proposing viewpoints and solutions.

The research subject is the implementation of ethnic policies in the Northeastern mountainous provinces of Vietnam from the perspective of Political Science. In terms of content, the dissertation focuses on four policy groups: socio-economic development and sustainable poverty reduction; education, healthcare and social security; preservation and promotion of cultural identity; and the development and strengthening of the grassroots political system, development of ethnic minority cadres, and promotion of the role of reputable persons. The implementation process is analysed through five stages: policy specification and planning; communication and mobilisation of participation; organisational arrangements, coordination and resource assurance; implementation of programmes, projects and policy activities; and inspection, supervision, evaluation and adjustment.

Spatially, the three provinces of Lang Son, Cao Bang and Ha Giang, based on their pre-2025 administrative boundaries, are purposively selected case studies and are not statistically representative of the entire Northeast; the former Ha Giang area is now part of Tuyen Quang Province. Temporally, the dissertation examines the period from 2019 to the present, focusing on 2021-2025. The 2019 starting point is associated with Conclusion No. 65-KL/TW, while 2021-2025 is Phase I of the implementation of Programme 1719.

3. Theoretical Foundations, Methods and Data Sources

The dissertation is grounded in Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the Party’s viewpoints and guidelines on ethnic issues, ethnic affairs, great national unity, and the development of ethnic minority and mountainous areas. It also selectively inherits approaches from Political Science, Public Policy and

Public Governance concerning policy implementation, multi-actor governance, results-based governance and citizen participation.

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods, including document analysis and synthesis and policy analysis; historical and logical methods; case studies combined with comparison; questionnaire-based sociological surveys; field surveys and observation; statistical analysis and data processing; generalisation and trend forecasting. A survey was conducted with 900 respondents in the three areas, comprising 500 cadres and civil servants involved in policy implementation and 400 ethnic minority residents. The groups were selected in accordance with the research objectives and conditions of access. The findings reflect the surveyed samples and are not statistically generalisable to the entire region; data were cross-checked across sources.

4. New Contributions of the Dissertation

Theoretically, the dissertation contributes to clarifying the substance of ethnic policy implementation from the perspective of Political Science; identifies the relationship among public power, the responsibilities of actors, resource allocation, people's rights and interests, trust and social consensus; and connects four policy areas, five implementation stages, six evaluation criteria and eight groups of influencing factors into an analytical framework applied in the dissertation.

Practically, the dissertation provides a body of evidence on ethnic policy implementation in Lang Son, Cao Bang and Ha Giang before the administrative rearrangement. It combines official reports with surveys of cadres, civil servants and residents; identifies similarities and differences within the surveyed scope, limitations and six issues arising. The dissertation also initially updates changes in implementation arrangements after 1 July 2025 and proposes seven groups of solutions directly linked to issues identified through empirical research.

Chapter 1
OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

1.1. Studies on Ethnic Policies and Studies on Ethnic Policy Implementation

Relevant research works are reviewed in two major groups: studies on ethnic policies and studies on the implementation of ethnic policies.

The first group focuses on the rights of minority groups, equality, solidarity, the relationship between national unity and cultural diversity, the development of ethnic minority areas, poverty reduction, education, healthcare, land, culture, human resources, and community participation. International studies on Vietnam indicate that development disparities among ethnic minority communities do not stem solely from a lack of resources, but are also associated with language barriers, education, market access, social status, opportunities for participation, and the cultural appropriateness of policies.

1.2. Research Works on Ethnic Policy Implementation

The second group of studies, focusing on policy implementation, has gradually clarified the roles of Party committees at various levels, local authorities, grassroots political systems, and officials directly responsible for implementation, as well as coordination mechanisms, resources, communication and mobilization, public participation, inspection and supervision, and the adaptive capacity of administrative apparatuses. Studies on public policy implementation emphasize the distinction between policy outputs and actual outcomes, the role of organizational capacity, coordination, discretionary authority in implementation, and the interaction between policy design and the implementation context. Approaches to policy capacity also demonstrate that implementation outcomes depend simultaneously on analytical, operational, and political capacities at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels.

1.3. Research Findings of Published Scientific Works and Issues for Further Research by the Dissertation

The literature review allows three major observations to be drawn.

First, the theoretical foundations concerning ethnicity, interethnic relations, and ethnic policies have been studied relatively extensively, providing

a basis for identifying policy objectives, target groups, principles, and instruments.

Second, empirical studies have provided substantial evidence regarding development disparities, access to services, and the roles of infrastructure, education, markets, culture, and community participation.

Third, research on policy implementation has increasingly focused on intersectoral coordination, officials' capacity, administrative burdens, feedback mechanisms, and outcomes for policy beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, several research gaps remain. There is still a lack of a unified analytical framework that approaches the implementation of ethnic policies as an integrated process. Comparative studies across mountainous provinces in the Northeast region remain limited. Few studies have simultaneously combined data from implementing agencies with the experiences of policy beneficiaries. Furthermore, the relationship between development outcomes and political dimensions, such as public trust, social consensus, great national unity, the capacity of grassroots political systems, and stability in border areas, has not been adequately clarified.

Therefore, this dissertation seeks to address these gaps by: clarifying the theoretical foundations from the perspective of Political Science; developing an analytical framework; assessing the current situation against a consistent set of criteria; comparing three case studies; and proposing solutions based on the limitations, underlying causes, and practical issues identified through the implementation of ethnic policies.

Chapter 2
THEORETICAL ISSUES ON ETHNIC POLICIES AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ETHNIC POLICIES IN VIETNAM TODAY

2.1. Some Key Concepts and General Theoretical Foundations of Ethnic Policy Implementation

The dissertation distinguishes between ethnicity in the sense of the nation-state and ethnicity in the sense of an ethnic group. In the concepts of ethnic minorities, inter-ethnic relations, ethnic issues and ethnic policies, the term “ethnicity” is used primarily in the sense of an ethnic group, while always being situated in relation to the Vietnamese national community. Article 5 of the 2013 Constitution and Decree No. 05/2011/ND-CP constitute important political and

legal grounds for affirming equality, solidarity, respect, mutual assistance for development, cultural rights and the promotion of the endogenous strengths of all ethnic groups.

On that basis, the dissertation defines ethnic policies in Vietnam as a system of State decisions, measures and instruments formulated on the basis of the Party's guidelines, viewpoints and policies on ethnic issues and inter-ethnic relations, institutionalised through law and specified through strategies, programmes, plans, projects, mechanisms and resources, with the aim of ensuring equality, solidarity, respect, and the lawful rights and interests of all ethnic groups; creating conditions for all ethnic groups to develop together and gradually narrowing disparities in development levels and conditions; preserving and promoting cultural identity; strengthening the great national unity bloc and the unity of the national community; and contributing to political and social stability, national defence and security.

This concept clarifies six dimensions: the political foundation; the object of intervention, namely ethnic issues and inter-ethnic relations; the mechanism of Party leadership and State institutionalisation and implementation; the system of instruments and resources; multi-layered objectives relating to development, culture, politics and society, national defence and security; and a scope broader than policies supporting ethnic minority communities or policies for mountainous development. Ethnic policies are comprehensive and inter-sectoral, prioritise development, aim at substantive equality and require the participation of multiple actors.

The dissertation conceptualises the implementation of ethnic policies as the process through which State agencies and relevant actors organise the translation of the objectives, contents and measures of ethnic policies into social practice by specifying policies and formulating plans; communicating policies and mobilising participation; organising, coordinating and ensuring resources; implementing programmes, projects and policy activities; and inspecting, supervising, evaluating, receiving feedback and making adjustments. Through this process, policy objectives are transformed into actual outcomes, contributing to the protection of the lawful rights and interests of ethnic groups, the promotion of sustainable development, and the strengthening of equality, solidarity, political and social stability, national defence and security.

From the perspective of Political Science, ethnic policy implementation is not merely an administrative or technical activity, but a process that manifests

public power, the responsibilities of actors, methods of resource allocation, people's participation and the extent to which they benefit. The Party provides leadership and strategic orientation; the National Assembly, Government, Prime Minister, ministries and local authorities institutionalise, decide and organise implementation within their respective powers; the Vietnam Fatherland Front, socio-political organisations, public service units, enterprises, reputable persons and communities participate in coordination, mobilisation, service provision, supervision and feedback. Ethnic minority communities are both beneficiaries and actors participating in needs identification, solution selection, implementation, supervision and the maintenance of outcomes.

Regarding instruments, the dissertation distinguishes the basis of political orientation from the State's policy instruments. Party documents establish viewpoints, objectives and orientations; the State institutionalises and implements them through five groups of instruments: legal and institutional instruments; plans and programmes; economic and financial instruments; organisational arrangements and public service delivery; and information, mobilisation and participation. This distinction clarifies the characteristics of the policy process within Vietnam's political system and avoids equating Party guidelines and policies with policy implementation instruments.

The political significance of ethnic policy implementation is reflected in translating the Party's guidelines and the State's policies and laws into actual outcomes; ensuring rights, equality and development opportunities among ethnic groups; strengthening trust, social consensus and the great national unity bloc; improving the capacity of the grassroots political system; and contributing to political and social stability, national defence, security and border sovereignty.

2.2. Contents, Procedures and Criteria for Evaluating Ethnic Policy Implementation

The dissertation identifies four principal policy groups as the scope of empirical analysis. The first is socio-economic development and sustainable poverty reduction, including support for residential land, housing, production land and domestic water; population stabilisation; infrastructure; production, livelihoods, occupational transition, credit and value-chain linkages. The second is education, healthcare and social security, focusing on human development, expanded access to basic services and prevention of recurrent poverty. The third is the preservation and promotion of cultural identity,

languages, scripts, heritage, indigenous knowledge and spaces for cultural practice. The fourth is the development and strengthening of the grassroots political system, development of ethnic minority cadres and promotion of the role of reputable persons. Programme 1719 is an important instrument but is not synonymous with the entirety of ethnic policies.

Component	**Main contents**	**Function in the analytical framework**
4 policy groups	Socio-economic development and poverty reduction; education, healthcare and social security; culture; grassroots political system, ethnic minority cadres and reputable persons	Defines the scope of empirical evidence
5 implementation stages	Policy specification/planning; communication/participation; organisation/coordination/resources; programme and project implementation; inspection/supervision/evaluation/adjustment	Main analytical axis for the implementation process
6 criteria	Political orientation, objectives and law; comprehensiveness, timeliness and coordination; appropriateness and adaptability; resources; participation, equity and inclusion; goal attainment and sustainability	Reference system for assessing quality and outcomes

The five stages of the process constitute the main axis of analysis. The first stage is policy specification and planning, which translates the objectives, principles and resources set at the central level into local tasks, areas, target groups, timelines and responsibilities. The second is policy communication and mobilisation of participation; its purpose is not merely to disseminate documents, but to help people understand their rights, obligations and access channels, and to enable them to provide feedback and exercise oversight. The third stage concerns organisational arrangements, assignment of responsibilities, coordination and resource assurance. The fourth is the implementation of programmes, projects and activities, namely the conversion

of plans and resources into actual support, services and outputs. The fifth is inspection, supervision, evaluation, feedback and adjustment, creating mechanisms for learning and correction during implementation.

The six evaluation criteria are: (1) the extent to which political orientations and policy objectives are ensured and legal requirements are complied with; (2) comprehensiveness, timeliness and coordinated implementation; (3) appropriateness and adaptability to local areas, target groups and contexts; (4) adequacy and rational use of resources; (5) assurance of participation, equity and inclusion in access to and receipt of benefits; and (6) goal attainment and sustainability. The criteria framework draws on the OECD's policy evaluation criteria but is adjusted to suit the political and legal requirements and the research subject of the dissertation. The criteria are used as analytical dimensions and are not mechanically aggregated into a single composite index.

2.3. Factors Influencing Ethnic Policy Implementation

The eight groups of influencing factors comprise: the Party's leadership, institutional quality and local political commitment; the quality of policy design, consistency and adaptability; the policy capacity of the system and implementing personnel; the adequacy and timeliness of resources and the capacity to convert them into outcomes; geographical and socio-economic characteristics and connectivity; cultural and linguistic diversity and the structure of inter-ethnic relations; people's trust, participation capacity and agency; and external changes and the system's adaptive capacity. Policy capacity is considered not only in terms of professional expertise but also operational and political capacity.

Component	**Main contents**	**Function in the analytical framework**
8 groups of factors	Leadership/institutions/commitment; policy design; system capacity; resources; geography, socio-economic conditions and connectivity; culture, language and inter-ethnic relations; trust and participation; external changes and adaptation	Explains outcomes, limitations and differences

The analytical framework is therefore organised into four closely interrelated layers: the four policy areas define the scope of empirical evidence; the five stages provide the axis for analysing the process; the six criteria constitute the assessment framework; and the eight groups of factors are used to explain causes and differences. This provides a consistent methodological basis for the analysis of the current situation in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3
THE CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION OF ETHNIC POLICIES IN THE NORTHEASTERN MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES AND ISSUES ARISING

3.1. Characteristics of the Northeastern Mountainous Region

The Northeastern mountainous region has a particularly important position in socio-economic development, national defence, security and external relations. It has a long land border, numerous border gates, and potential in border-gate economies, tourism, agriculture and forestry, minerals and the forest economy. At the same time, its mountainous terrain is fragmented, its population is dispersed, many communes and villages face exceptionally difficult conditions, infrastructure remains uneven, and development gaps among sub-regions are substantial. These characteristics create advantages while also increasing the costs and complexity of policy implementation.

In terms of population and culture, the proportion of ethnic minority residents is high, the ethnic composition is diverse, and customs, languages, livelihoods and community institutions vary. This requires communication, needs identification, support organisation and service delivery to be tailored to different groups and localities. In terms of national defence, security and external relations, the border location means that livelihood development, strengthening solidarity and trust, the grassroots political system and the protection of sovereignty are closely interconnected. Policy effectiveness must therefore be examined in terms of development, equity, social cohesion and stability in border areas.

3.2. Current Status of Ethnic Policy Implementation in the Northeastern Mountainous Provinces of Vietnam Today.

3.2.1. Current Status of the Implementation of Ethnic Policy Contents

3.2.1.1. Socio-economic Development and Sustainable Poverty Reduction

During 2021-2025, policies focused on housing, residential land, production land, domestic water, population stabilisation, essential infrastructure, production development, livelihoods, occupational transition and value-chain linkages. At the national level, by the end of 2024, the poverty rate in ethnic minority areas had declined by an average of approximately 3.4%; average income reached approximately VND 42.7 million per person and was projected to reach VND 46.4 million by the end of the period, approximately 3.3 times the 2020 level. However, several targets concerning infrastructure in exceptionally disadvantaged areas, settled cultivation and settlement, residential land and production land had not yet been achieved.

In Cao Bang, during 2021-2025, Programme resources were prioritised for infrastructure, housing, domestic water and production. The province was allocated more than VND 5,776 billion, supported the construction or repair of 589 houses, provided water-storage equipment to 12,970 households, completed 53 centralised domestic water works, and implemented 979 production-development projects and plans. In Lang Son, by the end of March 2025, 47 value-chain production-development projects involving 1,381 households and 309 production-support and livelihood-diversification projects involving 8,892 households had been implemented. By the end of 2024, the province-wide household poverty rate was 3.36%, while the average annual poverty reduction rate among ethnic minority communities during 2021-2025 was estimated at 2.71%. In the former Ha Giang Province, by May 2025, total allocated capital amounted to approximately VND 6,844.8 billion, of which approximately VND 4,473 billion had been disbursed, equivalent to 73.15% of the plan.

These figures show that substantial investment and many direct outputs have been generated. However, disbursement, the number of works or the number of participating households do not necessarily equate to effectiveness and sustainability. The dissertation does not rank the provinces because statistical reference periods, resource structures and aggregation methods are not entirely consistent. The focus is on assessing the extent to which resources

are converted into income, livelihoods, the capacity to use completed works and people's capacity for self-development.

3.2.1.2. Education, Healthcare and Social Security

Localities have simultaneously implemented ethnic education policies, support for pupils and students, literacy programmes and vocational training; health insurance, maternal and child healthcare and nutrition; social assistance, gender equality and protection of vulnerable groups. By the end of 2024, all five national-level education indicator groups under the Programme had met or exceeded their targets; the proportion of working-age labourers receiving appropriate vocational training reached approximately 54.3%; and the health target group achieved three out of four indicators.

In Lang Son during 2021-2024, 102 literacy classes were organised; 31 vocational-training models linked to employment and 273 vocational-training classes were delivered to 9,063 ethnic minority participants; and all members of poor and near-poor households and ethnic minority people living in disadvantaged and exceptionally disadvantaged areas were provided with free health insurance cards. Cao Bang completed all six boarding schools for ethnic minority pupils, implemented 14 procurement packages for digital-transformation equipment for 13 boarding schools, and organised 14 literacy classes with 244 learners. Health insurance coverage among ethnic minority communities reached 98%, the proportion of upper-secondary-school-age pupils attending school reached 57.3%, and several maternal and child health indicators met or exceeded targets.

The survey results provide an additional perspective on the quality of benefits received: 73.8% of cadres and civil servants gave positive assessments of education and human-resource development; 77.6% gave positive assessments of healthcare; and 81.6% gave positive assessments of social security. Among residents, 70.7% gave positive assessments of children's learning conditions and 67.4% of access to healthcare. This indicates clear progress in coverage and outcomes. However, quality assessment must go beyond the number of outputs and consider user experience, the ability to use services, employment after training, and language, gender and cultural barriers. Research on healthcare communication in the northern mountainous region also indicates the importance of two-way, user-centred communication in overcoming these barriers.

3.2.1.3. Preservation and Promotion of Cultural Identity

Cultural preservation has been implemented through heritage inventories, documentation and restoration; support for artisans and transmission of intangible cultural heritage; maintenance of festivals, clubs and arts groups; investment in cultural institutions; and tourism development linked to cultural identity. In Lang Son during 2021-2024, support was provided to 23 ethnic minority artisans; nine training and transmission courses were organised; 23 folk-culture clubs were established; 190 arts groups received support; and 69 of 115 cultural and sports facilities in villages inhabited by ethnic minority communities received investment. Cao Bang completed 11 heritage inventory and documentation dossiers; organised 11 transmission classes with more than 500 participants; maintained 17 clubs and 23 arts groups; and invested in several tourist sites and cultural houses. The former Ha Giang Province supported 11 exemplary tourist destinations, preserved 20 festivals, organised 50 transmission classes and supported investment in 355 cultural and sports facilities.

The survey found that 79.8% of cadres and civil servants gave positive assessments of cultural preservation, with a mean score of 4.00/5; among residents, the positive rate was 69.9%, with a mean score of 3.87/5. These results confirm relatively clear outputs, but sustainability depends on the extent to which communities genuinely exercise ownership, the transmission of culture between generations, the frequency of use of facilities, and the ability to harmonise preservation with tourism and livelihoods.

3.2.1.4. Building and Strengthening the Grassroots Political System, Developing Ethnic Minority Cadres and Promoting the Role of Reputable Persons

In Lang Son in 2024, there were 26,785 cadres, civil servants and public employees, of whom 22,008 were ethnic minority people; 56,633 out of 70,538 Party members were ethnic minority people, accounting for 80.28%. The province had 1,600 reputable persons and organised 29 information conferences for more than 1,500 attendances. Cao Bang organised five capacity-building conferences for 249 ethnic minority female cadres; 27 training courses with 1,740 attendances by reputable persons; eight study delegations involving 507 participants; and 2,597 visits and contacts to engage reputable persons. In the former Ha Giang Province, there were 2,296 ethnic minority cadres in agencies of the political system from provincial to commune level; 845 held leadership or management positions at provincial and district levels within the statistical scope of the report.

The survey of cadres and civil servants found that 82.4% gave positive assessments of the strengthening of the grassroots political system (4.04/5), while 86.8% gave positive assessments of national defence, security and solidarity (4.17/5). Residents gave positive assessments of strengthened solidarity among ethnic groups at a rate of 70.9% (3.94/5). Notably, the role of reputable persons was positively assessed by 81.6% of cadres and civil servants, but the corresponding proportion among residents was only 52.5%. This indicates that effectiveness should be measured by the extent of contact, information transmission, reflection of aspirations and problem-solving, rather than merely by the number of persons officially recognised.

After 1 July 2025, the two-tier local government model has increased demands on commune-level capacity. Lang Son mobilised 95 personnel with information-technology qualifications to support communes and wards; Cao Bang reorganised its specialised agency for ethnic and religious affairs and continued to provide guidance, inspection and local support; and, following the merger, Tuyen Quang had 124 communes and wards and assigned or transferred 135 provincial-level cadres, civil servants and public employees to support commune-level authorities during the initial period. These data primarily reflect the system's capacity to maintain operations and adapt; they are not yet sufficient to draw conclusions about long-term development impacts.

3.2.2. Current Status of the Process of Organising Ethnic Policy Implementation

At the stage of policy specification and planning, the provinces have established a relatively comprehensive system of resolutions, plans, assignment documents and resource allocations, closely following Resolution No. 88/2019/QH14, Resolution No. 120/2020/QH14 and Decision No. 1719/QD-TTg. However, the central-level guidance framework was gradually completed after the Programme's approval, creating certain delays; some contents had to be adjusted in response to needs and authority. After 1 July 2025, the reallocation of responsibilities between provincial and commune levels has continued to raise requirements for timeliness and adaptability.

At the stage of communication and mobilisation of participation, localities have used various forms of dissemination, training and communication and promoted the roles of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, socio-political organisations and reputable persons. However, the survey results show that residents are more cautious than cadres and civil servants in assessing access to

information and the degree of participation. This indicates that communication quality must be measured by the extent to which people understand, access and use information, can provide feedback and influence decisions, rather than merely by the number of conferences or communication products. Substantive participation must be linked to people's ability to have a voice and influence the implementation process.

At the stage of organisational arrangements, coordination and resource assurance, the system of actors and coordination mechanisms has been established, but fragmentation remains among programmes, projects, sectors and funding sources; the capacity to integrate, coordinate and absorb resources is uneven. Large geographical areas, difficult transport conditions and multi-sectoral professional requirements increase pressure on grassroots personnel. The two-tier local government model may reduce intermediate administrative layers, but it also requires commune-level authorities to have sufficient personnel, data, authority and implementation capacity.

At the stage of implementing programmes, projects and policy activities, Programme 1719 played an important instrumental role during 2021-2025 and was integrated with the Sustainable Poverty Reduction Programme, the New Rural Development Programme and sectoral policies. The dissertation does not equate the results of ethnic policy implementation with the results of Programme 1719. Implementation quality is assessed by whether actions are aligned with objectives and target groups, are timely, and provide actual access to and receipt of benefits, rather than solely by the number of projects or the disbursement rate.

At the stage of inspection, supervision, evaluation and adjustment, localities have maintained numerous inspection and supervision activities. However, the number of activities does not fully reflect the capacity to identify and remedy problems or use evidence to make adjustments. The survey of cadres and civil servants found a score of 4.00/5 for inspections focusing on key issues and 3.99/5 for inspection, examination and supervision; meanwhile, data monitoring and management scored only 3.90/5, receipt and handling of feedback 3.91/5, and use of evaluation results for adjustment 3.95/5. This provides a basis for shifting the focus from procedural, input and progress control towards the evaluation of outcomes, impacts and sustainability.

3.2.3. Overall Assessment of Ethnic Policy Implementation

Representative indicator	Mean score	Positive (%)	Comment
Cadres: implementation in line with objectives	4.11	81.4	Highly rated in terms of orientation and organisation
Cadres: production and livelihood support	3.97	79.4	Positive, but sustainability needs monitoring
Cadres: education and human resources	3.89	73.8	Lowest among the sectoral outcome groups
Cadres: national defence, security and solidarity	4.17	86.8	Highest
Residents: income and economic conditions	3.34	45.1	Changes in household economic conditions remain limited
Residents: reduced hardship and livelihood stability	3.40	46.4	More cautious than assessments of outputs
Residents: living infrastructure	3.70	62.9	Relatively positive recognition
Residents: learning conditions	3.86	70.7	One of the clearer outcomes
Residents: healthcare and health care	3.80	67.4	Positive, but access barriers remain
Residents: solidarity among ethnic groups	3.94	70.9	Positively recognised

Source: Survey results collected by the author from 500 cadres and civil servants and 400 residents.

The aggregated results show that cadres and civil servants assessed the five stages of the implementation process at a fairly good level, with mean scores of approximately 4/5, while residents were more cautious in assessing access,

participation, benefits and direct changes in their lives. Outcomes relating to education, healthcare, infrastructure, culture and solidarity were assessed more positively than improvements in income, reduction of hardship and livelihood stability. Because the two respondent groups did not use entirely identical questionnaires, the dissertation uses this difference only to identify trends and does not make mechanical comparisons.

Under the first criterion, implementation generally adhered to the Party's orientations, policy objectives and legal provisions; the provinces specified these through resolutions, plans, assignments and the identification of priority areas. Under the second criterion, organisational and coordination systems have been established, but guidance, project preparation and resource allocation were at times delayed, and integration mechanisms were not fully synchronised. Under the third criterion, policies were adjusted to local characteristics, but some norms and support models did not fully reflect differences among ethnic groups, localities and livelihood conditions.

Under the fourth criterion, substantial resources were concentrated, particularly through national target programmes, but the capacity to integrate, absorb, use and convert them into outcomes was uneven; implementation costs in geographically fragmented areas remained high. Under the fifth criterion, policies prioritised appropriate groups and disadvantaged areas and promoted the roles of reputable persons and communities, but participation at some stages remained largely consultative, while vulnerable groups continued to face access barriers. Under the sixth criterion, infrastructure, social services, poverty reduction and ethnic solidarity showed progress; nevertheless, livelihoods, income, the risk of falling back into poverty, dependence on support and long-term impact assessment remain issues requiring attention.

3.3. Issues Arising in Ethnic Policy Implementation in the Northeastern Mountainous Provinces

The main limitations include: insufficient consistency in the specification and integration of some policies; varying degrees of suitability to local characteristics and beneficiary groups; communication in some places not having shifted sufficiently from document dissemination to helping people understand, access and use policies; formalistic community participation at

certain stages; uneven coordination, enabling conditions and grassroots implementation capacity; some unsustainable livelihood models; and monitoring, inspection and evaluation that focus more on inputs, progress, disbursement and the number of outputs than on outcomes, impacts and sustainability.

Objective causes are associated with complex terrain, dispersed populations, natural disasters, climate change, low initial development levels, the multi-sectoral and complex nature of the policy system, and rapid institutional and organisational changes. Subjective causes relate to implementation capacity, coordination, data management, feedback, the timeliness of resources, communication quality and the extent to which people's agency is promoted. Changes after 1 July 2025 are considered a transitional context that requires further monitoring and should not be used to explain all the limitations of the preceding period.

On this basis, the dissertation identifies six issues: (1) ensuring policy consistency while meeting the need to adapt to local characteristics and beneficiary groups; (2) overcoming fragmentation and improving coordination effectiveness; (3) shifting from support to address deficiencies towards developing endogenous capacity and sustainable poverty reduction; (4) ensuring resources in association with improved grassroots implementation capacity; (5) substantively promoting the agency of ethnic minority communities; and (6) shifting from input- and progress-based management towards monitoring and evaluation based on outcomes and sustainability.

The research findings suggest that implementation quality depends on the interaction among leadership, institutions and policy design; organisational and personnel capacity; coordination; resources; local conditions and connectivity; culture and inter-ethnic relations; trust and participation; and changes in the implementation environment. The dissertation identifies gaps between policy orientations and actual outcomes, between allocated resources and the benefits received, between participation mechanisms and people's substantive voice, and between infrastructure and service outputs on the one hand and livelihoods, income and self-development capacity on the other.

Chapter 4
VIEWPOINTS AND SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ETHNIC POLICIES IN THE NORTHEASTERN MOUNTAINOUS PROVINCES IN THE COMING PERIOD

4.1. Viewpoints on the Effective Implementation of Ethnic Policies in the Northeastern Mountainous Provinces in the Coming Period.

In the coming period, ethnic policy implementation will be simultaneously affected by economic and geopolitical fluctuations, climate change, natural disasters, digital transformation, labour mobility, requirements for green and sustainable development, adjustments to the system of national target programmes, and the two-tier local government model. In the Northeast, these impacts are directly linked to border-gate economies, regional connectivity, tourism, agriculture and forestry, highland livelihoods and border protection requirements. Policy governance therefore needs to become more flexible while ensuring consistency in objectives, principles, and the rights and interests of ethnic communities.

The dissertation proposes five guiding viewpoints. First, ethnic policy implementation must be placed under the leadership of the Party and the unified management of the State, while steadfastly upholding equality, solidarity, respect, mutual assistance for development and the promotion of great national unity. Second, implementation must be situated within the overall development strategy for the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region, making use of each locality's advantages, strengthening regional linkages and expanding access to markets, employment and services.

Third, ethnic minority communities must be placed at the centre of and recognised as the agents of the development process; equity, inclusion, appropriateness and the promotion of endogenous strengths must be ensured. Promoting endogenous strengths does not mean reducing the State's responsibility; rather, it means directing public resources towards building self-development capacity, adaptability and access to opportunities. Fourth, policy consistency must be ensured while strengthening decentralisation, coordination and accountability; decentralisation must be accompanied by corresponding authority, resources, data and implementation capacity under the two-tier model. Fifth, the approach must shift from support to address deficiencies towards investment in development; resources must be integrated and

governance must be results-based, linking sustainable poverty reduction with endogenous strengths, culture, science and technology, and new development drivers.

4.2. Solutions to Contribute to the Effective Implementation of Ethnic Policies in the Northeastern Mountainous Provinces in the Coming Period.

4.2.1. Strengthening the Party's Leadership and Improving Mechanisms for Policy Specification and Implementation Appropriate to Local Characteristics

The focus is on improving the quality of leadership, inspection and supervision by Party committees; promptly specifying objectives and tasks; classifying localities and beneficiary groups according to the extent of deprivation and livelihood conditions; expanding local discretion under appropriate control and within the law; and establishing regular review mechanisms to address overlapping or outdated regulations. The intended outcome is a policy framework that is consistent in its objectives but flexible in its methods, thereby improving genuine access to and receipt of benefits.

4.2.2. Reforming Implementation Mechanisms, Decentralisation, Coordination and Accountability under the Two-tier Local Government Model

Responsibilities must be clearly delineated among provincial-level authorities, commune-level authorities and specialised agencies. Inter-sectoral coordination focal points should be established around substantive issues rather than procedures alone. Continuity must be ensured in the transfer of files, data, projects and resources when organisational structures change. Each decentralised authority must be accompanied by outcome criteria, public disclosure of information, inspection and accountability. Provincial authorities should focus on strategic orientation, coordination, professional support and data, while commune-level authorities should strengthen their capacity to implement policies close to the people and responsive to local conditions.

4.2.3. Linking Ethnic Policy Implementation with Regional Development Strategies, Harnessing Internal Strengths and Creating Sustainable Livelihoods for Ethnic Minority Communities

Policy resources should be connected with transport infrastructure, border-gate economies, tourism, speciality agriculture and forestry, the forest economy, value chains and labour markets. Livelihood support must be based on local advantages, actual needs and the capacity to participate in markets.

Vocational training, credit, science and technology, cooperatives, business linkages and risk management should be strengthened. Decisions to replicate models must be based on evidence concerning income, sustainability and household autonomy, rather than merely on the number of models or the amount of capital allocated.

4.2.4. Ensuring Resources While Strengthening the Implementation Capacity of the Political System and Grassroots Cadres

Resources should be allocated according to tasks, levels of difficulty and absorptive capacity. Integration should be strengthened while ensuring that objectives and target groups are respected. At the same time, job positions should be standardised and capacity-building provided in policy analysis, project management, data, communication, mass mobilisation and accountability. For commune-level authorities following decentralisation, mechanisms are needed for direct professional support from provincial authorities, digital infrastructure, shared databases and expert networks so that no capacity gaps emerge.

4.2.5. Reforming Mass Mobilisation and Policy Communication, Substantively Promoting the People's Right to Self-governance and the Agency of Ethnic Minority Communities

A shift should be made from one-way communication to dialogue, consultation and feedback. Communication formats should be diversified to suit languages, cultures and levels of digital access. The roles of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, socio-political organisations and reputable persons should be promoted without bureaucratising the role of communities. People should participate from needs identification and model selection through implementation supervision to evaluation and maintenance of outcomes. Participation mechanisms must enable people's voices to exert substantive influence on decisions, in line with the spirit of inclusive governance.

4.2.6. Shifting towards Results-, Data- and Sustainability-based Inspection, Supervision and Evaluation of Policies

An indicator system should be developed along the chain of inputs-activities-outputs-outcomes-impacts. Data should be connected between provincial and commune levels, and monitoring should extend to beneficiary groups, access, income, livelihoods, service quality, equity and sustainability. Findings from inspections, surveys and feedback must be used to adjust plans and resource allocation, replicate appropriate models or discontinue models that

fail to achieve their objectives. Data should be treated as a governance instrument, not merely as a reporting requirement.

4.2.7. Leveraging Ethnic Policy Implementation Outcomes to Strengthen the Grassroots Political System, Maintain Political Security, Protect Border Sovereignty and Safeguard the Party's Ideological Foundation

This is an overarching group of solutions that clarifies the political and social dimensions of implementation. Trust, great national unity, the "people's hearts and minds posture", political and social stability, and border protection must be built on the foundation of ensuring lawful rights and interests, equity, transparency, improved living standards and people's voluntary participation. Socio-economic development should be linked with monitoring grassroots conditions, mass mobilisation, preventing the exploitation of ethnic and religious issues, safeguarding the Party's ideological foundation, and coordination among local authorities, the Vietnam Fatherland Front, the police, border guard forces, reputable persons and communities.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation approaches ethnic policy implementation as a process of translating the Party's viewpoints and guidelines and the State's policies and laws into actual outcomes through the activities of the political system, mobilisation and use of resources, people's participation, and mechanisms of inspection, supervision and accountability. This approach makes it possible to connect the development dimension with public power, responsibility, lawful rights and interests, trust and social consensus.

Theoretically, the dissertation clarifies the concepts and characteristics of ethnic policies and their implementation; identifies their objectives, actors, target groups, instruments and political significance; and develops an analytical framework comprising four policy areas, five implementation stages, six evaluation criteria and eight groups of influencing factors. This framework helps distinguish policy content, the implementation process, evaluation criteria and explanatory factors while examining them as an integrated whole.

Practically, the research in Lang Son, Cao Bang and the former Ha Giang area shows that during 2021-2025 there were positive changes in infrastructure, poverty reduction, education, healthcare, social security, culture, the grassroots

political system, solidarity, national defence and security. However, results were uneven; infrastructure and social-service outputs were not always fully translated into improved income, livelihoods and self-development capacity. The survey of cadres and civil servants indicates that the implementation process was assessed relatively positively, whereas residents were more cautious regarding access, participation and direct economic outcomes.

Based on the identified limitations and causes, the dissertation identifies six issues requiring resolution and gaps in the implementation process: between policy orientations and outcomes; between resources and benefits received; between participation mechanisms and substantive voice; and between programme outputs and livelihoods, income and sustainability. Improving implementation quality therefore requires linking resources with coordination, capacity, participation and results-based evaluation.

The seven groups of proposed solutions are mutually supportive: the first six directly address the six issues identified in Chapter 3, while the seventh clarifies the overarching political and social dimension. The general requirement is to shift from programme-, input- and progress-based management to governance based on outcomes and sustainability; from fragmented support to integration by locality and regional development drivers; from treating people primarily as beneficiaries to recognising them as participating actors; from administrative decentralisation to decentralisation accompanied by authority, resources, capacity and accountability; from one-way communication to dialogue and feedback; and from procedural inspection to evaluation of actual changes for people and communities.

The coordinated implementation of these orientations and solutions will contribute to improving the quality of ethnic policy implementation in the Northeastern mountainous provinces, ensuring the lawful rights and interests of ethnic communities, narrowing development gaps, improving living standards and self-development capacity, and at the same time strengthening great national unity, people’s trust, the capacity of the grassroots political system and stability in mountainous and border areas.

LIST OF THE AUTHOR'S PUBLISHED WORKS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

1. Nguyen Trung Thanh (2026), *An Overview of Ethnic Policies and the Implementation of Ethnic Policies in Vietnam*, Youth and Scientific Research, Issue No. 92, dated 1 March 2026, ISSN 2734-9039.
2. Nguyen Trung Thanh (2026), *Notable Achievements in the Implementation of Ethnic Policies in the Northeastern Mountainous Provinces in Recent Years*, Youth and Scientific Research, Issue No. 95, dated 8 April 2026, ISSN 2734-9039.
3. Nguyen Trung Thanh (2026), *Solutions to Improve the Effectiveness of Ethnic Policy Implementation in the Northeastern Mountainous Provinces in the Coming Period*, Youth and Scientific Research, Issue No. 99, dated 16 May 2026, ISSN 2734-9039.