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# ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ



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## Modern vision in some of Ho Chi Minh's viewpoints on education

**Abstract.** During his lifetime, President Ho Chi Minh was not only a true Teacher but also a creator of democratic education in Vietnam according to the right educational philosophy. In this writing, the author wants to demonstrate the modern vision in some of Ho Chi Minh's educational viewpoints by pointing out the pioneering and compatibility of those viewpoints with modern educational theory and requirements of current practices.

**Key words:** Ho Chi Minh, teacher, educational viewpoints, modern vision.

**H**o Chi Minh was honored over the world as an outstanding culturist because of his great and plentiful contributions to culture, including educational culture. As a product of a great ideologist as well as an experienced educator, some of Ho Chi Minh's educational viewpoints have reached the level of wisdom and shown that they are pioneered and «ahead» of the era. Therefore, grasping and continuing to exploit that «treasure» to find out the spiritual motivation and solutions for the educational renovation in our country, is now an urgent and long-term requirement.

### *1. The propriety in some of Ho Chi Minh's viewpoints on education*

Ho Chi Minh was an outstanding culturist and he understood that educational development was a prerequisite for sustainable development. He attempted to create in Vietnam democratic education according to a completely new educational philosophy

compared to the previous feudal - colonial education. With his outstanding intelligence, his educational thinking clearly reflects the modern vision, the imperishable vitality when a series of viewpoints which he made decades ago are reaffirmed by UNESCO and remains the theoretical basis and the lodestar of actions in the process of educational innovation in our country. Most striking are some of the following views

*Firstly, Ho Chi Minh assessed the role and importance of education in a comprehensive and profound way.*

Talking about the great role of education in shaping human personality, the ancients concluded: «If Human beings are uneducated, they are unreasonable». Inheriting that spirit, Ho Chi Minh also asserted: «Goodness or badness is not available / *Much of it is due to education*».

Not stopping there, he also recognized the role of education in the «illiteracy elimi-

nation» and the «ignorance aggressor» combat - the consequences of the wicked «obscurantism» policy that the French colonial regime had implemented in Vietnam. It should be made clear that, in the past, ancestors only talked about «foreign aggressors» and fighting against foreign invaders. Ho Chi Minh was the first one to use the phrase «ignorance aggressor» and affirmed his determination to «eradicate the ignorance» since he was acutely aware of its dangers. Education also plays a big role in defending and building the country because to get victory over the strong enemies or build a new regime, all needed are the intellectual, ethical people - the qualities that education brings. The education in the right direction will turn «biological people» into «motivational people» and vice versa. He once emphasized: «Without education, without officials, culture, economy or other achievements cannot be mentioned» [7, p. 345].

Not only did he analyze comprehensively, Ho Chi Minh also raised the role of education to a new level by affirming: «Educational culture is an important front» [9, p. 647] and «educational construction», and «Making the people educated» is one of the most urgent tasks of the revolutionary government.

Inheriting His viewpoints, during the *Renewal* period, the Communist Party of Vietnam consistently asserted that «education is a top national policy»; its mission is to improve the people's intellectual, train human resources, foster talents. That proper perception of the Party demonstrates the shining value of Ho Chi Minh's ideology.

*Secondly, Ho Chi Minh's viewpoint on educational goals clearly reflected His modern vision.*

Educational objectives answer the question: «Who does that education want to train»? This is the first critical issue that needs determining because the goal will determine the content, method and form of education. In the treasure of human knowledge, *for society* or *for the learners* are different educational philosophies. By Ho Chi Minh, he identified the «dual» goal of a new education - «an education that pro-

duces useful citizens for Vietnam, an education that fully develops available competencies» [3, p. 34] of learners. The goal of serving the people and serving the society requires education to train the idealistic class of people, knowing how to act practically for the sake of the nation, not the scholars and dogmatist who «memorized the book, knew Marx said this, Lenin said that, but with his task of sweeping, they let the house full of rubbish» [12, p. 668]. On the other hand, in the process of devoting himself to society that man himself will be perfected in both capacity and quality. Thus, in Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy, goals *for society* and *for the development of individual competencies* have been merged into one and in reality they always blend into one. When recording in the yellow book of Nguyen Ai Quoc school that «Learning to work, to be a human, to be a cadre», to study to serve the people [5, p. 208] (1949), in fact, He was still asserting the «dual» goal of education.

It is worth mentioning that, in 1996, in the Delors Report, UNESCO also proposed the goal: «Learn to know, learn to do, learn to live together and learn to be human». The four pillars proposed by UNESCO are considered to be educational truths of the era but they are very close to Ho Chi Minh's viewpoint half a century ago. The «preceding» of Ho Chi Minh thought has shown His remarkable vision.

*Thirdly, Ho Chi Minh's viewpoints on comprehensive educational content but focusing on ethics have always been the educational truth of all times.*

Ho Chi Minh advocated building a *comprehensive* education program including virtue, intellect, body and beauty but always emphasized the «need to pay more attention to the ethical education» [11, p. 746.], that means, the «standard outcomes» of the education firstly have to be «good people». This is a very profound viewpoint because not everyone can become a genius, but if you try, anyone can become a good person and a good person will be helpful to the society. Moreover, only if the *heart* is clear, the *mind* will shine, people must «become human» to

be «successful»; ethics with specific expression as high responsibility in work will be a «platform» for people to reach talent. Therefore, focusing on ethical education will not only get «ETHICS» but also get «TALENT» and vice versa. The ethics that Ho Chi Minh referred to is revolutionary ethics. He requested to «teach students how to be *patriotic, compassionate*» [4, p. 120] and *know how to work, respect labor* at first.

Ho Chi Minh's viewpoint valuing ethical education show the wisdom in the era of revolution 4.0. When humans have invented artificial intelligence, smart robots, and super-intelligent computers, the differences between *person* and *machine* are only emotions and ethics. In the scientific age, if there is no ethics, science will only bring great tragedies to mankind. On the other hand, ethical education is also a way to resolve the paradox of modern society where the materials and fortunes are more and more, public sentiment decreases; violence, misleading lifestyles, egoistic psychology increases.

Ho Chi Minh's considering virtue as the «root» is still very consistent with the tradition of respecting the morality of Vietnamese culture. In the current period, the enhancement of virtue will contribute to preventing the «momentum» of moral decline in society, improving the «endogenous strength of the nation». A century ago, when our nation had not yet achieved independence, the famous Chinese innovator Luong Khai Sieu told the patriot Phan Boi Chau that «Do not worry about national independence, Your country should only concern that national people do not have capacity to be independent» [13, p. 92]. Creating patriots with the national spirit is the duty of education. When ethics is always the «root» of man, Ho Chi Minh's viewpoint respecting ethical education will be the educational truth of all time.

*Fourthly, Ho Chi Minh's guidelines on mottos and methods of education clearly showed their compatibility with the requirements of the era of knowledge economy.*

As a seasoned practice activist and true teacher, Ho Chi Minh understood the im-

portance of the method. He recommended that: «Teachers must find a *way to teach*. What to teach, *how to teach* students to understand quickly, remember for a long time, improve quickly» [7, p. 290-291]. In order to guide teachers, Ho Chi Minh offered a series of truthful guides on mottos and methods of education.

Regarding the mottos of education, breaking down the concept of disregard for manual labor and the scholastic illness of feudal education, Ho Chi Minh advocated the «merge of Mind and Practice», i.e. «*Learning must go hand in hand with practice*», *learning must combine with working and production*. The reason is that the purpose of learning is to practice; «learning without practicing is futile. Practice without learning, the practice will not be smooth» [5, p. 361]. He said clearly, if someone who knows «thousands of books» does not put into practice, he is only a «book trunk». Concerning about the young generation of Vietnam, in the *Will* He left, He advised the school to combine learning with working because working will help young people respect the hard work, withstand hardships and not be social freeloader... Compared to the current situation, when many pupils, students do not love working, do not know how to work, even for serving themselves, Ho Chi Minh's advice on the commitment to attach learning to working becomes more and more rational. The implementation of Ho Chi Minh's principle of *learning along with practice* also promotes the removal of non-practical knowledge in the program, turns to equip learners with qualities and skills to be able to «practice» when they go out in real life.

Ho Chi Minh's viewpoint on teaching methods of *teaching way of thinking* and *developing creativity for learners* is now an important principle of modern education. Education is not a teaching of rote memorization but a training of the ability to think because it is a unique capacity of the human being, a measure of «human qualifications». The saying of philosopher Decartes that «If I think, I will exist» is to emphasize that. Upholding the method of suggestive thinking,

Ho Chi Minh reminded the teacher to «avoid the teaching of indoctrination» [11, p. 746], the learners must avoid the «mugging and rote learning» or «close the eyes following the textbook in an agreeable way» [8, p. 99]. The implementation of Ho Chi Minh's creativity-inspired approach will help students actively explore knowledge, not be tied to old creeds.

Ho Chi Minh also always emphasized that «*education must train people to get self-study spirit, take the self-study as the essence*» [4, p. 312]. In fact, no school can teach learners a sufficient amount of knowledge throughout their lives, so it is important to teach learners *how to learn*. Specifically, it is to teach them how to find materials, how to think, how to perform a learning process without teachers. In today's information age, self-study is a must. Modern educational theory defines: The purpose of education is to guide the learning process and put the learning responsibility in the «hands» of learners. The 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the 8th National Congress (2013) clearly defined: «to focus on teaching how to learn, how to think, to encourage self-study, to create a basis for learners to update themselves and renew knowledge, skills and develop ability» [14].

Not only teaching how to learn, education must also convey to learners the spirit of *lifelong learning* because life constantly arises and requires new knowledge. Talking about this, Ho Chi Minh emphasized: Learning is a regular work because «stopping is backing up, is backward, i.e. we eliminate ourselves first» [9, p. 266]. On the contrary, «the more you progress, the more you feel that you have to learn more» because the learning will gradually become a habit, an *autotelic* need. Ho Chi Minh's example of self-study to become an outstanding cultural celebrity vividly embodies the philosophy of «Lifelong learning» and the motto of the frequent education that the world is upholding. He himself «laid the foundation» for the policy of building an open education system, a learning society in Vietnam.

*Fifthly, Ho Chi Minh's viewpoint on democratic practice in education is fully*

*consistent with the ongoing education-democratized process.*

According to Ho Chi Minh, democracy is people's right to be the owner and to master, so the democracy in education is first and foremost shown in standpoint: This is an education *for everyone*. The 1946 Constitution and the 1959 Constitution set out His «ultimate desire» was that «everyone can study». Article 15 of the 1946 Constitution states that «Private schools are opened freely and must be taught in accordance with the State's program» [See 1946 Constitution of Democratic Republic of Vietnam] reflected the early policy of «socializing» education of Ho Chi Minh. That proper policy has been being promoted in our country to meet the increasing learning needs of the people.

Understanding the power of democracy, Ho Chi Minh also requested: «*In school, there should be democracy*» [6, p. 266] and this principle must «penetrate» into all relationships in the school. First of all, democracy must be demonstrated in *the way of teaching - learning* and in *the relationship between Teachers and Students*. Ho Chi Minh affirmed that, in the democratic regime, the tradition of «Respecting teacher and valuing morality» did not disappear but the relationship between teachers and students became more equal. In terms of responsibilities, teachers and students are equal in the obligation to emulate: Teachers emulate to teach well, students emulate to study well. In terms of knowledge, «teachers and students discuss together. What is not yet clear, then ask, discuss until it is clear» [6, p. 266], that means making learners reach the enlightenment «of knowledge. The spirit of democracy must also be the basic principle in the relationship among *teachers*. Specifically, they must really unite and discuss together to unify the curriculum; no one has the «exclusive right of truth»; a prestigious person is a person who can convince colleagues with his profound knowledge and proficiency in pedagogy.

Ho Chi Minh especially emphasized the need to ensure the democratic principle in *management, in the relationship between leaders and teachers*. Understanding the bu-

reaucracy, the authoritativeness of many leaders, Ho Chi Minh advised: «It needs to discuss democratically. If there are any job, the school administrators should discuss with everyone, make everyone's thoughts *clear*, motivate everyone to do it together, it is not that the in charge committee plans and makes everyone do it» [10, p. 436]. He also clarified: «If everyone understands, the will be pleased to do. With people who do not understand, are not satisfied, it will ruin the job if you make them do» [6, p. 466]. According to Ho Chi Minh, democratic discussion is not a benison of superiors to the subordinates but an intrinsic requirement of leadership because in an educational environment, no manager can be a professional in every specialty that the school trains. Therefore, the talent of the leaders is «measured» by the ability to promote the intelligence and enthusiasm of the collective. Ho Chi Minh's conclusion that «if the in charge board has initiative and democracy, it is a good school» [10, p. 438] is really a great truth of the education sector. Here, democracy is not only a principle of organizing but also demonstrates the scientific and human nature of the cultural environment.

Not only that, by signing the *Ordinance on establishing an Autonomous Fund for Vietnamese Universities* in October 1945, Ho Chi Minh had an idea of ensuring the *autonomy* for universities from very early.

Ho Chi Minh's viewpoint on increasing democracy in education is currently a mainstream of advanced education in the world and a basic development direction of Vietnam's education. As evidence, the document of 12<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Party affirmed: we would increase autonomy and accountability of education and training institutions; State management would move from control to supervision and continue to promote socialization of education ... Topicality is a testament to the vision of an ideologist.

*Sixthly, Ho Chi Minh's viewpoint on the teachers contains many truths and suggests fundamental solutions to the current process of educational innovation.*

Starting to build a democratic education, Ho Chi Minh emphasized the difference in

career ideals between the people's teacher and feudal «teacher»: In the past, teaching was a «livelihood» way; today, teachers are soldiers on the educational front with the responsibility to train new socialist people.

Talking about the teacher, Ho Chi Minh asserted: «Not everyone can train» [5, p. 356], not everyone can be a teacher. Because setting an example is the best educational method, the teacher must be an example in all aspects, especially in terms of ethics and in particular the love of the profession and love for children. The teacher is also a scientific «scout», so they must master the knowledge and persevere in implementing the motto that «the educators must also be educated».

Faced with the existing uneven quality of teachers and negative phenomena in education, Ho Chi Minh praised the nobility of «planting people» but clearly distinguished: «Good teachers - teachers who deserve to be teachers - who are the most glorious, good teachers are anonymous heroes» [11, p. 402-403]; conversely, those who are not exemplary will adversely affect the honor of teachers and learners. Ho Chi Minh's viewpoint that «not everyone can be a teacher» contributes orientating the enrollment and training policies in pedagogical schools and the direction of selecting human resources for educational institutions to focus on quality.

Ho Chi Minh also has a very realistic view on the policy towards teachers. He clearly knew that teachers were human and if they could live by their job, they would be comfortable to follow. After the August Revolution, on behalf of the Government, He declared: «When the financial situation is plentiful, the government must think of teachers who are... responsible for training talents for the country» [2, p. 309-310]. In the *Letter to officials, teachers, workers, staff, pupils, students on the occasion of starting the new school year* (October 1968), he also advised: «The branches and levels of The Party and local government must really pay more attention, and take care of the school in all aspects» [12, p. 508]. In every historical period, Ho Chi Minh's advice on

building teachers is still a «lodestar» to solve the «hot» issues of the education in Vietnam today. .

### 2. *Replacement of conclusion*

Ho Chi Minh was named as the embodiment of the «future culture» because He often saw problems that others could not see and had not seen. His outstanding ability is evident in the process of creating new education in Vietnam. The product of education is human, so the Vietnamese people who have made the glorious feat of the twentieth century, are the most vivid and convincing evidence for the propriety of Ho Chi Minh's educational ideology.

The modern vision of Ho Chi Minh's educational ideology is also reflected in the fact that: A series of modern educational principles such as changing from teaching what the school *currently has* to teaching what society *needs*; moving from equipping knowledge to teaching thinking methods, ethical qualities and skills; shifting from being *teacher-centric* to being *student-centric* or socializing education, giving autonomy to educational institutions, etc. were mentioned by Ho Chi Minh in one form or another, at one level or another. The science, topicality, pioneering, modernity in His educational viewpoint has clearly shown His *vision of the century*. Therefore, some of Vietnamese scientists have proposed the idea of «copyright registration» to Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy.

The vitality of Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy is also shown in the fact that this ideology is still a «lodestar» of action to build and overcome the negative status in the education as the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress acknowledged: «Education and training have not really become a leading national policy, a motivation for development. The quality and effectiveness of education are still low compared to requirements, *especially higher education and vocational education*» [1, p.113 - 114]. Particularly in the field of higher education, the inadequacy was shown in the fact that the training program have not been linked to the labor market, graduates are not strong enough to «work», scientific research is still limited in both quantity and quality, scientific piracy is quite common...

In order to find the right solutions and steps for the future process of educational innovation, we must both look out to the world, increase practical summaries, and continue to exploit Ho Chi Minh's educational ideology at a «new level» because its strategic vision, pioneering and usability has been proven in reality. Continuing to apply creatively the modern viewpoints of Ho Chi Minh to the educational renovation in our country today is both our responsibility to the national future and the sacred sentiment that we dedicate for the teacher Ho Chi Minh.

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