

## PRESIDENT HO AND VIETNAMESE EDUCATION

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One of the matters that President Ho had shown the greatest concern about was education.

President Ho was extremely hurt because his country had been under the rule of colonialists and feudalists and his compatriots had not had food to eat and clothes to wear and had been deprived of education. He considered education as an important means of propaganda to urge the masses to carry on the revolution, and having an education as one of the basic rights of the masses. Of the eight demands he submitted to the 1919 Versailles Conference, one was to ask that our people be free to learn cultural and technical subjects. Under his leadership, the party platform and the platform of the National United Front both stressed education as one of the basic slogans of the revolution.

Right after the success of the August Revolution, at the first meeting of the Council of Ministers on 3 September 1945, President Ho included in the six urgent tasks the so-called "fight against illiteracy." He pointed out: "An illiterate nation is a weak nation." (1) He emphasized that every Vietnamese should be interested in and have the duty of acquiring new knowledge to build the country, and that more particularly the youngsters must study hard to make Vietnam and its people feel proud to stand side by side with big powers on the five continents. His appeal thus launched a nation-wide movement to learn cultural subjects, in spite of poverty and war.

In the process of democratic national revolution, he made the educational sector realize the task of wiping out the remnants of colonial and feudal education, guiding Vietnamese education toward serving the people and the war of resistance, and bringing a fine significance to teaching, which was to be closely linked with the political task of the party and the nation in different periods.

When the North had switched to the phase of socialist revolution, he

again pointed to the importance of education in national construction. He said: "Without education, without cadres, we cannot say anything about economy and culture."(2) He clearly indicated that the new task of education was to form socialist men -- men who would be totally developed and whose love for their country and socialism, sense of collective ownership, cultural and technological capacities, and labor output would be constantly heightened.

He always reminded schools of combining education with productive labor, and gave orders to the educational sector to make labor education one of the subjects in regular curricula. In 1961, he launched the emulation movement called "two good": very good teaching and very good learning. In 1962, he gave awards to good teachers and good students. When the American aggressors began fighting their war of destruction in the North, he ordered a switch to organization of wartime education. He often inquired about and reminded the cadres in charge of the need for careful air defense to guarantee safety for young students. At the start of the 1968-1969 school year, he sent a personal letter to the educational sector to praise its past achievements, to indicate the direction for improvement of quality of education, and to remind schools of the need to pay enough attention to political, ideological, cultural, and scientific education; to organize living conditions; and to develop internal democratic practice.

Every person working in the educational sector was happy and moved because President Ho encouraged and taught him to think not only about the importance of his work but also about the way he could professionally improve himself: the young kindergarten teacher "must love children first"; teachers of adult classes are "unknown heroes"; teachers in the highlands are those who help implement party and government policies there. General school teachers could have a full book containing President Ho's teachings about every aspect of education as a science; namely, the task of general schools and each level; content, principle, and methods of education, etc.

He inquired about and gave advice to all students, from the kindergarten children to the students of supplementary education classes. He set forth five teachings for young children and five teachings for youths, which served as basis for their training to become successors of the revolution.

President Ho many times wrote letters to all adults to urge them to enroll in anti-illiteracy or supplementary education courses; he also wrote personal letters to praise progressive units and outstanding individuals.

He considered learning political and cultural subjects as an important task which every cadre, party member, and Lao Dong Youth Group member must fulfill to assure his own progress and to further develop the capabilities used in the service of the revolution. Speaking in the ceremonies marking the 30th anniversary of the party, on behalf of the party Central Committee, he called on "all party members and Lao Dong Youth Group members, in whatever position they may be and whatever work they may do, to further cultivate their revolutionary morality, to get rid of individualism, and to do their best to learn political, cultural, scientific, and technological subjects."(3)

The great leader of the party and the nation, in spite of all the work he had to do, President Ho always tried to fulfill the task of teacher toward the cadres and people who were lucky enough to live close to him. In the period of underground activities, or after he had become President, he always found some ways to impart political and cultural knowledge to the people around him and to help them to heighten their professional capacity. For people having different cultural and political backgrounds, he knew how to explain so that they would easily understand and long remember his words. For everybody, he wholeheartedly assisted and encouraged to learn. He often repeated Lenin's teaching, "Learn, learn more, learn forever."

The concern of President Ho and our party about the construction of Vietnamese education, the cadres doing educational work, and those who went to school was one of the major factors that helped our country's education to develop at such a fast pace and to score very brilliant and proud achievements in the past 25 years.

President Ho's teachings and directives about education in the past decades were great contributions to the construction of Vietnamese teaching science. As our country, which had been a poor and backward colony, rose up to fight the imperialist aggressors, carried out the democratic national revolution, and then moved toward socialist construction, we naturally had to be faced with many difficulties and confusions in the construction of new education. But President Ho and our party creatively applied the popular Marxist-Leninist principles to our country's reality, and succeeded in setting up a system of correct and sound views about the position, goal, principle, and measures of education, which our party and people are doing their best to carry out.

First of all, President Ho defined the important position of education in the revolution. On the one hand, he admitted that men were the products of social realities, and on the other hand, he emphasized the bad effects of man's concept toward social realities.

"In sleep, everybody looks good and kind,  
But when people get up, they are divided into evil and virtuous ones;  
Being evil or virtuous does not come naturally,  
But rather from education."(4)

Therefore, he considered "culture and education as an important front" of revolution, both in the democratic national revolutionary phase and in the phase of socialist construction. Depending on the needs of the revolutionary task, he stressed the task of solving illiteracy and providing the working people with supplementary education, and the task of forming the new socialist man -- the totally developed man. In that spirit, education was considered a very important part of the ideological and cultural revolution and as something that would greatly affect all three revolutions -- the revolution in production relationships, the technical revolution, and the ideological and cultural revolution. Such a concept of education created, in a short time, an

unprecedented development of education, which went beyond our country's many low economy and beyond the difficult wartime conditions.

President Ho defined the model man to serve as the goal for our country's socialist schools. According to him, the new socialist man must first of all have revolutionary morality. He emphasized that revolutionary morality should be the basis. "Like a river having a source, without this source the river runs dry, and like a tree having roots, without roots the tree withers. A revolutionary must have morality."(5) The "key" of revolutionary morality was "determination to fight until one's death for the party, for the revolution," and "absolute loyalty to the party, the people."

But at the same time, he also attached importance to teaching cultural and scientific subjects to raise one's professional and specialized capacities. According to him, the new man must be totally developed, and first of all must have virtues and talent. "One must have virtues along with talent. Having talent without virtues leads to corruption and great harm to the country. Having virtues and no talent is like a Buddha sitting in a pagoda, without being able to help anybody."(6)

In short, in the new man, virtues and talent are closely linked together. Virtues must be reflected in talent. Talent must go hand in hand with virtues.

The new man, Vietnam's socialist, must know how to combine true patriotism and proletarian internationalism, must have a spirit of independence and self-rule, know how to creatively apply Marxist-Leninist principles and the world's scientific knowledge to Vietnam's reality, and continue and further develop their national traditions while being capable of absorbing what is good of mankind.

In regard to the content of education, President Ho emphasized total education: "In education and learning, pay attention to all aspects: revolutionary morality, socialist understanding, culture, technology, labor, and production."(7) He often told us to take good care of our children's health and play.

He attached importance to teaching the young generation how to distinguish between right and wrong, and knowing to love and to hate: to love the fatherland, socialism, the people, labor, science; to hate the nation's enemy, individualism, and other bad habits.

According to him, children should be taught and trained, right in their childhood, to have a spirit of collective ownership. He usually called youngsters and children "small owners of the country" and "future masters of the country."

He was concerned with teaching the youths and youngsters the communist ideal and making them believe in the victory of communism and see their responsibility for being the successors of their fathers' and brothers' revolution.

Methods of education also were the subject of President Ho's concern. He guided us toward having the right ways of teaching our students ideology and morality. Through his ideas, many lessons were learned: education must be related to the struggle of society and productive labor; as morality was to serve as the worker class's political stand, importance must first be attached to teaching people to be "loyal to the party, pious to the people" and to learn from the working people; national traditions must be taught, with examples of good people and good deeds to be used as teaching materials; children, while being respected, should have their own responsibility toward society by means of "small work for people of young age, depending on their capability"; behavior and habits must be formed on the basis of morality; school, family, and society must be coordinated; education in collectivities must be done through youth group and units; education must be appropriate for different ages, and so on.

President Ho also issued directives about teaching of cultural knowledge. According to him, the knowledge the students should have must be both general and realistic so as to allow them both to continue their studies and to make immediate contributions to the construction of the country. He gave directives for different levels:

"At college level, it is necessary to combine scientific theory and practice, to learn the theories and advance sciences of friendly countries, and to combine them with our country's reality so as to realistically help in the building of the country.

"At the middle level, it is necessary to give students sound and realistic general knowledges, which must be appropriate for the need and future of national construction, with things that are not necessary for everyday life to be left out."(8)

He was very concerned about the quality of cultural education. He reminded both teachers and learners that they "must try to raise the quality of cultural and specialized subjects, for the purposes of realistically solving the problems created by our country's revolution and, in a future not too distant, reaching the peaks of science and technology."(9)

He also gave us precious ideas about the principles of education. He taught us:

"Education must serve the political line of the party and the Government and be closely linked with production and the people's life. Learning must go hand in hand with practice; theory must be related to reality."(10)

"Educating the youth cannot be separated from, but rather closely linked with the struggles of society."(11)

"There must be democracy in schools... But within democratic practice, students must respect their teachers, and teachers must like their students."(12)

"It is necessary to show a spirit of self-sufficiency, practice of thrift

for construction of school, and good implementation of the principle of closely linking schools with society and learning with practice.

"Schools must be closely related to family and society. Youth and women's groups, government agencies, and party committee echelons must be truly concerned about schools and the children's learning."(13)

"On the basis of good political education and ideological leadership, struggle to raise the quality of culture and specialized knowledge..."(14)

Speaking of education, one cannot fail to mention ways of speaking and writing, which are the major means for teachers to impart knowledge to students. In this regard, President Ho also gave us many good lessons. He told us to protect the purity of Vietnamese. He reminded us of using the language of the masses, words and phrases that the latter could easily understand, and expressing ourselves about difficult and complicated matters in an easy-to-understand manner by avoiding unnecessary words borrowed from foreign languages, etc.

Through his teachings about education and his views and treatment of the young generation, as well as through his training of cadres and the masses, we can draw many lessons about pedagogy, ways of teaching and learning, self-training methods, and also ways of writing and speaking.

President Ho taught us so many valuable lessons about education. But the finest lesson was the President himself, the great teacher of the Vietnamese worker class and nation, who succeeded in combining a noble mind and a pure soul, steel revolutionary will and immense love for the people, and progressive scientific theory and fine national traditions; devoted all his life to untiring learning and teaching; and led our people from one victory to another.

Twenty-five years have passed since the day President Ho set forth the anti-illiteracy task, which was then one of the major tasks of the state and our people. For the history of a nation, 25 years are an extremely short time. Besides, in these 25 years we had to fight aggression committed by the two big imperialist powers -- France and America. But under the clear-sighted leadership of our party and Government, headed by President Ho, our people scored wonderful achievements in the revolution in general, and in the development of education in particular. Twenty-five years of continuous revolution have completely changed the cultural and moral image of the North. The dark situation of the great majority of the population being illiterate no longer exists. In the North today, the great majority of the youths have finished level-I and level-II education; the masses of workers and farmers are having compulsory level-I education; many key cadres in rural areas are getting level-II education. The network of kindergarten and beginners' classes and general schools has been extended in all the delta and midlands, and is being set up at a fast pace in the highlands. Every hamlet now has kindergarten and beginners' classes; every township has a level-I and a level-II schools; every district

has a level-III school. At present, the North has nearly 2 million beginners and kindergarten students, over 4 million general school students, 87,000 college students, 143,000 vocational middle school students, and over 10,000 students abroad. Every year, there are about 1 million adults both doing production and regular work and going to complementary education classes at different levels. Many townships, enterprises, and organs have organized their own complementary education schools.

As compared with 1939, the year under colonial and feudal rule in which education was at its peak, the North today has 10 times as many general school students and 200 times as many college and vocational middle school students.

Because the people's cultural capacity has been raised, economic management is in better conditions for improvement and the technical revolution is being speeded up; a new, lively, happy, and scientific life is taking shape in all cities and rural areas.

The quality of education has basically changed: the young generation, educated in the communist ideal, is reaching the noblest dreams of mankind, shaping its mind in the light of science, and feeling freer; as Le Duan, first secretary of the party, has put it, man is "becoming a subject that has a clear concept of historical creation." (15)

Today, revolutionary heroism and our nation's ever-present patriotism have been further appreciated by our people, mostly by the young generation. The scientific knowledge we acquired, combined with true experiences in life, has shown its effects and, in many cases, has led to marvelous creations serving in an effective manner the resistance against America for national salvation and socialist construction.

The ranks of science and technology cadres have taken shape, with nearly 50,000 people of college background and over 150,000 people of middle school background. The ranks of teachers have increased very quickly. Today, we have over 100,000 general school teachers; the total number of teachers of all kinds is more than 200,000, or five times the number of teachers 15 years ago, or 10-20 times the total right after the August Revolution had been successful. Although these cadres' professional capacity is not yet enough to satisfy all the needs of the revolution, after being trained in the democratic national revolution and socialist revolution and the two wars of resistance against imperialist aggression, and educated by the party and President Ho, our cadres now possess the fine morality and behavior of socialist teachers, in the pattern that President Ho had suggested.

In the course of its relying on its own efforts to promote construction and development, Vietnamese education has gone through many unique experiences in such matters as ideological and moral training, combination of learning and work in a lack of mechanization, campaign among the masses for participation in building of education, development of education under conditions of low economy, wartime, etc. In all fields, the educational sector has made progressive examples. Examples of creative development in both quantity and quality have proven that President Ho's teachings were extremely correct and did

reflect, in a lively manner, the party's thoughts, the nation's traditions, and the masses' role.

But in addition to our achievements, there are shortcomings that must be resolutely overcome, particularly in regard to quality of education and cultural and scientific knowledge. Never before have we had greater, more complicated, and more difficult tasks than the ones we have today, when the socialist construction in the North demands that we speed up all three revolutions, and when our people's resistance against America for national salvation, despite its great victories, is being faced with more and more hardship.

We are doing our best to carry out the directive on education of the Party Central Committee secretariat in the 1968-1970 period, issued on 14 February 1969 and aimed at further raising the quality of education and at the same time developing it at a steady pace. At the present time, learning and correctly carrying out President Ho's teachings, particularly what he wrote in the letter he sent to the educational sector in October 1968 and in his sacred will and testament, will help us to find the direction and more energy to fulfill even better the historic task that the party and President Ho entrusted to us, namely, "to train the successors of our party's and our people's great revolution,"(16) "the successors, being both 'red' and 'industrious,' of socialist construction."(17)

We must attach importance to ideological and moral education, as we carry out President Ho's teaching:

"Both teachers and students must always strengthen their love for the fatherland and for socialism, show revolutionary sentiment toward workers and farmers, remain absolutely loyal to the revolution and confident in party leadership, be ready to accept whatever task the party and the people may give, and always try to deserve their heroic compatriots in the South."(18)

On the other hand, we must improve teaching and learning of culture, which must help students not only to increase their knowledge but also to enhance their understanding of the revolution and ability to take revolutionary action. Consequently, we must avoid the phenomenon of blind cramming and of preparing for exams behind closed doors, but rather know how to cleverly combine teaching of cultural subjects and the current productive labor movement.

Furthermore, we must make sure to have not only a young but also a healthy generation. All our educational force "must jointly organize and manage the material and moral life in schools to make it better everyday and to guarantee good health and security."(19)

To properly carry out the above-mentioned tasks, we must make education a true job for the masses; to do so, we must first "fully develop socialist democracy" in order to unite and to mobilize all forces inside and outside the schools -- teachers and students, cadres, and the people -- and second, "promote real interest of all sectors, party committee echelons, and local

authorities in such a job and in caring for our schools in every way."(20)

The masses' view in the campaign for building strong education in our country has become an experience, a tradition. The progressive units of the educational sector, particularly the progressive townships like Cam Binh in Ha Tinh Province, have proven that self-understanding of both teachers and students, as well as the people's participation in education, not only helped to overcome many difficulties, but also guaranteed to link schools with everyday life and productive labor, and guaranteed party leadership over education. However, not all local areas have known how to apply that lesson. In many schools there still exist head-of-family relationships which prevent students from really liking their teachers and encourage them to learn in a passive way. Many local areas have not yet succeeded in urging the people to take part in development of education, or still separate schools from society, or run after the masses by loosening school discipline and lowering requirements for quality. Some party committee echelons and authorities still fail to see all their responsibility for taking care of the future generation, still expect schools to be solely responsible for students, and in some cases even create problems to education.

For us cadres in the educational sector, we must fully recognize that the factor that determines the quality of education, now or in the future, is still the teachers.

In the last 25 years, we educational workers were studying and struggling to carry out President Ho's teachings, and trying to follow his examples and to train ourselves to deserve the title of socialist teachers.

However, because of poor training of teachers, in spite of such strong points as loyalty to the party, hard-working quality, active behavior, etc., there still exist many weaknesses in the ranks of teachers. Among us, there still are people who do not really love their profession and children, still fail to guarantee labor discipline or to keep learning to further raise their political understanding and professional capacity, and still cannot set examples to their students of "hard-working, thrifty, honest, and righteous" behavior and "total justice and impartiality." We must try to improve ourselves and to help one another to move forward continuously. The direction of our efforts is to properly carry out President Ho's teaching -- "always learn more, learn political and specialized matters. If you do not keep progressing, you won't be able to keep up with common progress and will become old-fashioned."(21)

To pay back what President Ho had done for us, we pledge to fulfill the responsibility of teachers, namely, to turn his "education for all" ideal into reality and to help train "the successors of our party's and our people's great revolution," "the successors, being both 'red' and 'industrious,' of socialist construction."

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Tran Dan Tien: "Stories About President Ho's Active Life," sixth edition,

- Van Hoc Publishing House, Hanoi, 1969, p 116.
2. "Instructions for Training of Level-I Summer Camp Guides" in "President Ho's Appeals," Vol. III, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1956, p 279.
  3. President Ho's statement at the meeting marking the anniversary of the party in Hanoi, Nhan Dan, 6 January 1960.
  4. "Midnight" in "Diary in Prison," Van Hoa Publishing House, Hanoi, 1960, p 192.
  5. "Revolutionary Morality" in "Change of Working Methods," Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1954, pp 30-31.
  6. "Instructions for Training of Level-I Summer Camp Guides" in "President Ho's Appeals," Vol. III, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1956, pp 279-280.
  7. "Letter to Education Cadres, Students of Colleges, Schools, and Complementary Education Courses, 31-8-1960" in "President Ho Discusses Education," Giao Duc Publishing House, Hanoi, 1962, p 227.
  8. "Letter to Professors, Students, Youth Cadres, and Children" in "President Ho's Appeals," Vol. II, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1956, p 220.
  9. "Letter of Uncle Ho to Cadres, Teachers, Workers, Civil Servants, Students, and College Students at the Start of A New School Year," Hoc Tap, Oct. 1968.
  10. See 7.
  - 11, 12. "Speech Delivered at Opening of Vietnam People's College, 19 Jan. 1955" in "President Ho Discusses Education," Giao Duc Publishing House, Hanoi, 1962, pp 127-128.
  13. Conference of educational sector. Vietnam News Agency bulletin of 13 August 1963.
  14. See 9.
  15. Le Duan: "Under the Party's Glorious Banner, for Independence, Freedom, and Socialism, Move forward to Score New Victories," Hoc Tap, February 1970.
  16. See 9.
  17. "Last Will and Testament of President Ho."
  18. See 9.
  19. See 9.
  20. See 9.

21. "President Ho's Instructions Given at Congress of Outstanding Emulators of Educational Sector, 21 February 1956" in "President Ho's Appeals," Vol. III, Su That Publishing House, 1956, p 249.

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