

Current Application of Ho Chi Minh's Philosophy of Education to Renovate Educational Management for Ethnic Minority Areas by Some Vietnamese Northern Mountainous Provinces

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Abstract

To better the quality and efficiency of education, and to enable education and training to become a top-level national policy, the foundation and driving force for national industrialization and modernization, our Party has advocated a comprehensive reform of education and training, especially a full awareness of Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy in the on-going educational revival. This paper presents some of Ho Chi Minh's important philosophies of education, and the current application of those philosophies to renovate the management of general education for ethnic minority areas by some mountainous provinces in Northern Vietnam.

Keywords: Educational philosophy, educational management, general education for ethnic minority areas, mountainous provinces in Northern Vietnam.

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INTRODUCTION

During his lifetime, Ho Chi Minh always affirmed that the ultimate and most realistic goal of measuring the development of each country was to provide its people with enough food and clothing, a free and happy life. Ho Chi Minh spent his whole life striving for radical human liberation. He said "the people insist on the primacy of food for their existence". Therefore, the policy of Vietnam's Party and the government is "to take great care of the people's lives" – which is a basic task to be fulfilled in the process of "cultivating" people. Currently, the most important and profound thing to apply Ho Chi Minh's thought on "cultivating" people is human issues and the most profound nature of the human issues is to constantly improve the people's intellectual standards, welfare, and civil rights. Towards the goal of raising people's intellectual standards, Ho Chi Minh left us plentiful and diverse educational philosophies. They have been of great significance in the revival of education in Vietnam today in general, including the Northern mountainous provinces. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to do research on "The current application of Ho Chi Minh's philosophy of education to renovate educational management for ethnic minority areas by some Vietnamese Northern

mountainous provinces". This paper is restricted to general education in ethnic minority areas and its actual situation observed in the provinces of Phu Tho, Tuyen Quang, Lao Cai, and Bac Kan.

RESEARCH METHODS

+ Theoretical research

Documents, guidelines and policies of the Party and State on the management of general education in ethnic minority areas are synthesized, based on which related documents are analyzed and synthesized in order to form a theoretical basis for general education for ethnic minority areas.

+ Practical research methods

• Questionnaire

Questionnaires are used for administrators, teachers, and staff working in the education sector to learn about the situation of general education in ethnic minority areas in some Northern mountainous provinces such as Tuyen Quang, Phu Tho, Lao Cai, and Bac Kan.

• Interview

Administrators and teachers from the provinces of Phu Tho, Tuyen Quang, Lao Cai and Bac

Kan are interviewed about the management of general education in ethnic minority areas.

- **Expert elicitation**

The managers of a number of high schools, the administrators of the Departments of Education and Training of Phu Tho, Tuyen Quang and Bac Kan provinces are consulted to evaluate the management of general education in ethnic minority areas.

The Northern mountainous region and the current status of its general education

The Northern mountainous region

Administratively, the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam covers 14 provinces, namely: Ha Giang, Cao Bang, Lang Son, Bac Kan, Thai Nguyen, Tuyen Quang, Lao Cai, Yen Bai, Phu Tho, Bac Giang, Dien Bien, Lai Chau, Son La, and Hoa Binh. The northern mountainous area secures a quite special position in terms of geology, with a transport network being invested and upgraded, so it is increasingly convenient for exchanges with other regions in the country to be made and an open economy to be built. It is considered an especially important strategic area of the whole country in terms of socio-economy, security, defense and foreign affairs; It also plays a decisive role to the ecological environment in the entire Northern region.

This region is sparsely populated. Here, the Kinh majority lives among 35 other ethnic minorities who have their own unique cultural identities such as Thai, Tay, Nung, Muong, H'Mong, Dao, Khmu, Khang, Giay, etc.

The regional infrastructure is underdeveloped due to natural barriers and a low level of socio-economic development. Despite the presence of the state-funded programs No. 134 and No. 135, the systems of electricity, roads, schools and health stations have basically been able to meet district-level requirements only.

The actual situation of education for ethnic minority areas in some Northern mountainous provinces

Definition of general education for ethnic minority areas

Article No. 5 of the Decree No.05/2011/ND-CP issued on January 14th, 2011 by the Government on Ethnic Affairs affirms that: "Ethnic minorities are ethnic groups with a population smaller than that of ethnic majorities within the territory of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and "Ethnic majorities are ethnic groups with a population accounting for over 50% of the country's total population, according to a national census" (Government, 2011).

"Ethnic minority areas are where a large number of ethnic minorities live together as a stable community in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam"

(Government, 2011). Thus, the concept of an ethnic minority area is closely related to the concept of an ethnic minority, but it refers to a region, or a geographical area, that means, the topography of the land, the space with typical natural and socio-economic conditions. The basis for defining "an area" is natural, socio-economic features (Bac Kan Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2019). Ethnic minority areas should be interpreted in accordance with the provisions of Clause b, Article No. 2, Decree No. 53/ND-CP on organizational consolidation of ethnic affairs apparatus under People's Committees at all levels: "Ethnic minority areas are, in the narrow sense, considered on the basis of district-level administrative units with an ethnic minority population of 5,000 or more, forming a stable community" (Government, 2004). The areas where ethnic minorities have a small population, and live among other ethnic groups are called "an area with ethnic minorities" or "an area with inter-ethnic minorities". This makes "ethnic minority area" a relative concept, a specific area, with differences in ethnic, natural, and certain socio-economic factors compared to other areas in the country (Nguyen Lam Thanh, 2014). Therefore, the Northern mountainous ethnic minority areas in this paper are considered via the scale of the whole region, including 14 provinces, with the socio-economic features that are contributed by ethnic minorities being predominant.

Unlike general education in other regions, general education in ethnic minority areas has its contents and activities centered around its special target being students from ethnic minority areas (mostly ethnic minority ones) with a system of specialized schools (boarding ethnic high schools, semi-boarding ethnic high schools, mixed classes where support policies for students, teachers and administrators from ethnic minority areas are in place or the teaching of ethnic minority languages and Vietnamese language to ethnic minority students is being implemented, etc; or where there are lots of specialized contents and activities including their tailored teaching programs and textbooks, a tailored policy system for teachers and students from ethnic minority areas, etc.).

The actual situation of general education for ethnic minority areas in Northern mountainous provinces

Firstly, in terms of scale: in recent years, the region's education scale has changed significantly. The system of schools and classes has been constantly expanded, renovated and supplemented with necessary teaching equipment; consequently, it has partly met teaching and learning needs from teachers and students. The teaching staff has also been enhanced in both quantity and quality with an increasing degree of standardization. However, the scale of the regional education is not on par with development requirements. The system of schools, classes, and their facilities are still inadequate and in short supply – makeshift classrooms and mixed classes can still be seen in the

mountains. Insufficient quantity and low quality are the biggest problem related to educational human resources facing Northern mountainous provinces.

Secondly, in terms of quality: thanks to the endeavours made by whole sector, the quality of education has been raised. Coupled with ensuring students' daily attendance and maintaining the number of classes is a constant improvement of the quality of education, especially in remote and extremely difficult areas. However, the quality of education is still low; weak students still account for a large proportion; the universalization of education has not yet been stable. The dropout rate in the region has decreased but still been high, in which more female students drop out than male ones. In general, regardless of efforts to overcome difficulties brought about by natural and socio-economic conditions, the level of educational development has not corresponded with the region's potentials and new requirements set out by the international integration.

The application of Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy to the renovation of educational management for ethnic minority areas in some Northern mountainous provinces

Firstly, Ho Chi Minh was cited as saying that an illiterate nation is a weak one

During his lifetime, President Ho Chi Minh was very interested in fostering education - training, and the cultivation of Vietnamese people. Among the ten policies implemented by the Viet Minh during the revolutionary period, he advocated a policy of "building a national education..., promoting and fostering the national education to make future generations stronger and stronger" (Ho Chi Minh, 1995). He also soon realized that uplifting the educational level is a must for our country in the process of national construction and development. Therefore, when answering journalists (January 1946), he did not hesitate to confess: "My sole and ultimate desire is to make the country be completely independent, the people be completely free and have enough food, clothing and housing, and be able to learn" (Ho Chi Minh, 1995).

For a strong nation and people, that nation cannot be illiterate, because illiteracy means weakness, especially in the current context of knowledge economy and information age. Therefore, education and training plays a vital role. Being aware of this, the Party committees and local governments in Northern mountainous provinces have put forward lots of resolutions and projects on education and training development in regular reports made by the People's Councils and the People's Committees at different levels. Thereby, thanks to the attention, leadership and direction by provincial governments, the coordination and assistance at all levels and from various sectors, especially the support from local people; together with the determination and efforts by officials and teachers

of the education sector, the cause of education and training in Northern mountainous areas has recorded many important achievements, gradually affirming the quality of all-round/spearhead education, meeting the learning needs of local people.

Secondly, President Ho Chi Minh said that education and training contributes to raising people's intellectual standards, training human resources, fostering talents for the purposes of building and defending the nation, serving the revolutionary cause and the people.

He was, very early, deeply aware of the role played by education; in his speech at the opening ceremony of political classes for secondary and high school teachers in the North in 1958, he affirmed: "To reap a return in ten years, plant trees. To reap a return in 100 years, cultivate people". According to President Ho Chi Minh, the school aims at training children to be good citizens and officials as the future owners of the country. The aim of education is to create a fully developed human being that possesses both political integrity and professional competence, and that is both talented and virtuous. According to him, the purpose of learning is to work, to be a good human being, a good cadre; to learn is to serve the unions and the social class to which that one belongs and the people, the homeland and the human race; to learn is to build socialism. He believed that it is necessary to build a purely Vietnamese education which enables a full development of available capacities of students and everyone, and which is of national, scientific and public nature.

As a token of its application of Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy to current conditions, Tuyen Quang province has kept adopting solutions to improve the quality of education and training through Action Program No. 35 – CTr/TU issued on January 15, 2014 by the Provincial Party Committee on implementing Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW of the Party Central Committee (11th plenum). The education sector of Tuyen Quang province has effectively studied and implemented Directive No. 05 - CT/TW of the Politburo; Directive No. 27/CP-TTg of the Prime Minister on the study and follow-up of President Ho Chi Minh's thoughts, morals, and style. As a result, the percentage of educational administrators and teachers meeting required standard professional qualifications or higher is 100%; of which the above-standard qualifications were fulfilled at 71.3% for preschools, 74.7% for primary schools, 63.1% for secondary schools, 14.0% for high schools; management staff with above-standard professional qualifications made up 56.7% (Tuyen Quang Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2019). The work of political, ideological and moral education for teachers has been carried out seriously and regularly; the notification of Party policies and guidelines, State policies and laws has been timely given to teachers and educational administrators at all levels. However, there remains a

small number of leaders of educational institutions that have a limited capacity to advise, direct, administer and organize the implementation of educational tasks and that have not met new managerial requirements of the education reform. Teachers have not yet been active in their self-study and self-improvement; the percentage of teachers reaching above-standard qualifications was low (14%); personnel planning-included cadres in some schools have not self-trained to meet required standards; the quality of personnel planning-included cadres is not high.

Thanks to the attention, leadership and direction of the People's Council and the People's Committee of Phu Tho province, together with the coordination and assistance at all levels and from all sectors, especially the support of local people, Phu Tho province has achieved lots of great accomplishments in education and training, step by step affirming the quality of all-round and spearhead education, meeting the learning needs of its local people. The provincial education and training sector has focused on improving the quality of teaching associated with educating morals and personality to students, ensuring that the goal of "imparting knowledge" be in harmony with that of "schooling students in correct behavior". Basically, educational managers and teachers all are devoted and responsible; they have contributed to the maintenance of disciplines and order, and quality of education and training; many core teachers are dedicated to their profession and have made outstanding contributions to the society. However, the quality of education is still different among areas; school violence in educational institutions continues to occur; education on morals, life skills and lifestyle for students remains limited; ethical violations and bad lifestyles are still common among a small proportion of students (Phu Tho Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2020).

Under the close leadership and direction of the Provincial Party Committee, People's Council, Provincial People's Committee and the Ministry of Education and Training; with a high consensus of Party committees, governments at all levels and local people, an effective coordination among departments, agencies, mass organizations and social organizations in the implementation of school-year tasks, the Lao Cai Department of Education and Training has been proactive, creative, and highly determined in implementing Directives, Resolutions of the Central Government, Programs and Schemes on main tasks of the school year that are associated with the moto: "For dear students, building disciplined and cultural schools with authentic quality of education"; especially with the efforts, enthusiasm and high responsibility of the management staff, teachers and employees. Campaigns, emulation movements, contests and competitions in the sector associated with the promotion of the learning and follow-up of Ho Chi Minh's thoughts, morals and style have been implemented creatively and effectively,

typically the competitions of "the heads of Lao Cai educational institutions follow Uncle Ho's teachings"; "10 promises of Lao Cai teachers to follow Uncle Ho's teachings" (Lao Cai Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2018); outstanding examples of educational models appeared together with good principals, good and devoted teachers who are qualified for innovation and integration. Managerial innovation of the sector has been carried out more strongly in educational institutions. A clearer change has been witnessed for managers and teachers in their awareness of the importance of the managerial and operational innovation of their institution. Many of them have actively innovated and been creative in their work; the role of the head has been made more clearly; the activities of professional groups, the tasks of form teachers, extracurricular activities, team activities, school and class landscaping, especially the implementation of discipline and order have been paid more attention, contributed to building a safe and friendly educational environment, towards the goal of improving the quality of all-round education. However, there have still been some administrators and teachers who violate the code of ethics for educators, the law and exam regulations.

Thoroughly grasping his point of view, Bac Kan Provincial Department of Education and Training has insisted that "The system of boarding schools for ethnic minorities be maintained and strengthened with more facilities so as to well organize teaching and rearing activities. Semi-boarding high schools for ethnic minorities operate relatively efficiently, give semi-boarding students meals and accommodation within their property. These schools actively innovate their methods of teaching, testing, and evaluation, and carry out educational activities suitable for ethnic minority students, constantly improving the quality of education" (Bac Kan Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2019).

Thirdly, with regards to principles, rules and methods of education, Ho Chi Minh emphasized: theory must be related to practice; teaching must be systematic, sequential, avoiding the dogmatic method of teaching, teaching must be learner-oriented; the school must be attached to the family and society; Everyone must master self-study

In the spirit of Official Letter No. 791/HD – BGDDT dated June 25, 2013, in the 2018-2019 school year, Tuyen Quang province had 7 schools adopt the model of attaching schools to local production and business activities, such as: tea production-associated school, sugarcane production-associated school, orange production-associated school (Tuyen Quang Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2019). The provincial education sector has promoted innovations in teaching methods, diversified organizational forms, and paid attention to creative experiential learning activities. It has been selectively applying great strengths of the

new school model (VNEN), teaching Vietnamese Language 1 - educational technology, Fine arts using new methods, Lifestyle education, Hands-on activities, STEM education...in elementary schools. However, a small number of management staff have not taken decisive actions to direct the innovation of teaching methods in their institution; the management and direction of management staff in a large number of educational institutions is not very effective; The implementation of STEM education model in most high schools has still been a mere formality.

Lao Cai continues to deploy effective educational models to implement the educational principle of "Learning goes hand in hand with practice, education combines with production, theory must be attached to reality" in 100% of schools such as: 5 school models associated with farming and animal husbandry; multicultural schools associated with the community; schools associated with tourism and businesses; schools associated with building ecological environment, etc., of which 30 schools have invested in building a system of net houses that adopt high technology to help students access advanced technology (Lao Cai Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2018). Campaigns and emulation movements have received enthusiastic responses from educational institutions, teachers and students, especially the campaign "*Each teacher is an example of morals, self-study and creativity*", the emulation movements "*Teaching well, learning well*", "*Innovation and creativity in teaching and learning*", "*Innovating and improving the quality of education and training of human resources*", "*Departments assist departments, schools assist schools*" in association with the implementation of Directive No. 05-CT/TW of the Politburo on promoting the study and follow-up of Ho Chi Minh's thoughts, morals and style. They have exerted widespread influence, generating high motivation to better education quality; social responsibility, professional pride, self-discipline to improve professional qualifications among teachers and a sense of self-study among students.

To meet practical demands of the reform, the education and training sector of Phu Tho province always pays attention to output standards in terms of skills, foreign languages, and informatics; career orientation and streaming in education for high school graduates and career counseling for high school graduates. The role of centers have been promoted to support educational institutions in advising and orienting skills education, organizing experiential learning activities, prioritizing education on local heritage and culture. The cooperation between schools, families and society has been strengthened to manage and educate students; a democratic, disciplined, orderly, safe and friendly educational environment has been built. Due to innovation requirements, the society is strongly asking for education reform; however,

necessary conditions for implementing a comprehensive and fundamental innovation in the education sector are insufficient, so educational management in the province is still limited; a small proportion of local people still hesitate to support due to their feeling of unease.

As a poor province in the Northern mountainous region, Bac Kan has "introduced and guided teachers, students and schools to exploit e-Learning lectures prepared by the Ministry of Education and Training at <http://elearning.moet.edu.vn> in order to innovate teaching and learning contents as well as methods. The e-Learning lecture repository is a collection of highly interactive lectures that help with students' self-study, self-review to enhance knowledge, and serve as reference resources for teachers to innovate teaching content and methods. Teachers are encouraged to participate in the preparation of e-learning lessons for schools, educational departments, and the Ministry of Education and Training" (Bac Kan Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2019). Moreover, in order to cope with the prolonged Covid epidemic, the current direction for and management of online learning applications for students by the province absolutely correspond to reality.

Fourthly, regarding educational content

According to Ho Chi Minh, educational content must be comprehensive, practical and close to Vietnam's reality. In education, full attention must be paid to the following aspects: revolutionary ethics, socialist enlightenment, culture, technology, labor and production. He said: "It is necessary to provide students with solid, practical general knowledge that is suitable to the needs and future building of the country, leaving out parts unnecessary for real life" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011). Many times he insisted that: quality is more important than quantity (Ho Chi Minh, 2011). Education must have a plan, must be based on specific circumstances and conditions; educational plans must go hand in hand with economic plans.

On the basis of mobilizing social resources, Phu Tho province has invested in teaching equipment to pilot smart schools, smart classrooms and the STEM education program (which integrates science, technology, engineering and maths) to access "smart education" where possible (Phu Tho Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2020). A focus has been given to the improvement of the quality of child care and education at preschool level; the maintenance and improvement of the quality of universal preschool education for 5-year-old children, universal primary education, universal secondary education, and illiteracy eradication. Socialization, cooperation and international integration in education and training have been promoted. It is necessary to implement streaming and career orientation for high school students in the period of 2020 - 2025; focus on bettering the quality of the system of boarding and

semi-boarding high schools for ethnic minorities; build schools of national standards, high-quality schools, and gifted high schools so that these schools become key school systems, creating a breakthrough in educational quality and human resource development.

Stemming from the practice of innovation and international integration, the Department of Education and Training of Tuyen Quang province advised the Provincial People's Committee to issue Plan No. 40/KH-UBND dated May 30, 2018 on the implementation of the Project on teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system in Tuyen Quang province in the period of 2018 – 2020. The 10-year English program under the National Language Project has been deployed effectively. In addition, schools have promoted the application of information technology in their management and teaching activities. The school management software and the connected school software have been in effective use. 50% of secondary schools, and over 95% of high schools have used electronic grade books (Tuyen Quang Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2019). The provincial Department of Education and Training has been using softwares for document management and direct control of all related agencies. Leaders of the Department have been using digital signatures, which limits the involvement of paper documents.

As Lao Cai Province is located in a border region, the provincial education sector has adopted many solutions for a synchronous and drastic direction from the departmental level to the school level in the spirit of innovation, high determination, being specific and grassroots-oriented; clearly defining key tasks that need direction for implementation, namely: universalization of education, education on ethnic affairs, education for upland areas, building a new school model, schools associated with practice, etc.; focusing on discovering and fostering excellent and gifted students; promoting scientific and technical research; improving the quality of all-round education, especially in ethnic minority areas and areas with extreme difficulties; planning and developing the network of schools and classes; developing the system of boarding and semi-boarding schools for ethnic minorities; building official residences for teachers and houses for semi-boarding students, etc.

To further implement the current educational program in the direction of developing students' capacity and quality, Bac Kan Provincial Department of Education and Training "continues to direct related agencies to review teaching content in current textbooks; to remove teaching content with knowledge and skills beyond the required level; to make adjustments so as to avoid duplication of content between subjects and educational activities; to supplement and update appropriate new information as

a replacement for old and outdated one" (Bac Kan Provincial Department of Education and Training, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

It can be affirmed that Ho Chi Minh brought about progressive educational thoughts of his time, in line with the reality of Vietnamese revolution. His educational thoughts were inherited from the quintessence of human culture and combined with the national identity; they were both philosophical and practical. Despite coming into existence many decades ago, Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on education remain meaningful for the current educational development of our country in general and of Northern mountainous provinces in particular. The application of Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy has contributed to renovating educational management in Northern mountainous provinces, creating a driving force for the education and training sector in these provinces to be proactive, creative, and cooperative, highly determined to overcome difficulties, focus on key tasks of education to make the cause of education - training in these provinces further develop and achieve many important results.

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