Educating Political Ideas for Vietnam's Students Today - Problem and Solution

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Abstract: *Political and ideological education for students has always been a focal point in higher education and training that universities put their efforts using various teaching methods. However, the significant impact of the shadow of the market economy, as well as globalization and international integration on the young generation in general and students in particular, together with the limitations of teaching practices in universities hindered the progress of political and ideological education for students. The following analysis contributes to finding solutions to improve political and ideological education for university students in Vietnam in the current period.*

Keywords: *political ideology, education; student; situation, solution.*

President Hồ Chí Minh once said: "Having talent without virtue is useless, having virtue without talent means having difficulties in doing anything."

In accordance with his thought, talent and virtue are two different qualities, yet they are inextricably linked. While talent is an important factor, virtue is the priority in in personality development. Talented people without virtue become useless. Talent and virtue are the two primary pieces that complete our personality.

Inheriting and implementing Hồ Chí Minh's thought, our Party and State's views have also confirmed that education on politics and ideology morality and lifestyle Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh thought plays an important part in higher education. On that ground, the primary goal of higher education is to educate Vietnamese people to develop comprehensively by acquiring morality, knowledge, health and well-being, aesthetics sense and professionalism, as well as being loyal to the ideal of national independence and socialism; forming and fostering the personalities, qualities and civic capacities of good citizens, meeting the requirements of nation building and defense mission.

Over the years, universities have always attached great importance to the thorough dissemination and implementation of the Party's directives and resolutions on political and ideological education for the young generation. Especially in the current period, in the face of the strong impact of the shadow of the market economy, the process of globalization and international integration on the young generation in general and students in particular, the main ideological education activities for students in universities are promoted through different teaching methods.

So what is political ideology education for students? How are universities implementing this work now? Why is it necessary to enhance political and ideological education for students in the current period? What solutions should political and ideological education for college students provide ? The following discussion analyzes the current situation and will contribute to explaining these issues.

"Education" refers to a very broad concept that can be defined in different ways, such as: "Education is a two-sided process, on the one side it is the impact from the outside on the educated object (the impact of knowledge education and human culture through pedagogues on students' lives and on the other side (and more importantly), it is through this influence that the object transform himself, perfects himself, raises himself up through education"[1] "Education is a human-oriented activity implemented through a system of impactful measures aimed at imparting knowledge and concepts, training skills and lifestyles, and fostering necessary ideas and morals for the intended object, helping to form and develop capacity, qualities and a personality suitable to the purposes and objectives of preparing the intended object for participation in production activities and social life"[2]. "Education is a social form, a process of purposeful, planned and self-directed influence on people, leading to the formation and development of psychology and a sense of personality"[3]. In a broad sense, education is defined as the process of exchanging and transferring human knowledge complying with predetermined rules. Education in a narrow sense involved a process of forming human personality under the influence of purposeful activities of educators[4].

Today, education is considered as a tool to unleash human potential, a productive force that directly bolsters socio-economic development. Improving education will further a fast and sustainable socio-economic development.

To elevate a person's personality development conforming to social norms, educators must take an interdisciplinary approach in teaching; hence, education involves the combination of different academic disciplines: political-and ideological education, moral education, legal education, economic education, aesthetic education, popular education, ecological education, and gender education. Thus, political ideology education is believed to be an indispensable component in the educational process of a person[5].

"Politics" is also a concept that has wide connotations and different interpretations. According to K. Marx, politics is related to power and the problem is that power is not evenly distributed across different social classes. It is this unequal distribution of power that has led to class conflicts and struggles. Thus, politics is a process through which classes with conflicting interests struggle to seize or influence state power. At the same time, C. Marx predicted society would move "towards the abolition of all classes and towards a classless society," which means that politics will be eliminated from social life. Since politics is a

manifestation of class conflict, if there were no classes, there would be no state, and politics would cease to exist in social life. V.I. Lenin said that "politics is the participation in state affairs, setting direction for the state, the determination of the form, tasks and contents of state activities"(6). The most important factor of politics is the "organization of state government." Therefore, "politics is the relationship between classes, nations, peoples and social forces in the acquisition, maintenance and exercise of state power"(7). Politics is the synthesis of the directions and goals set by class and nation, the practical activities of classes, parties and the state to carry out the chosen developmental trajectories in order to achieve the pre-determined goal.

"Thought" is understood as a general reflection of objective reality in human consciousness, a manifestation of the interests of people, of classes and of society. As a reflection of people's objective world, thought may be a complete, correct or incomplete, outdated, or even misleading reflection of objective reality. Correct and progressive thought when being turned into action, will promote the development of society and vice versa. In fact, the struggle on the ideological front had always been a fundamental element of the history of class struggle. A class that wants to attract and rally the masses may not ignore the ideological propagation.

From the above educational, political and ideological concepts, it can be seen that: ideological and political education is essentially a purposive influence process of the educational intended objects (i.e., organizations, unions) on the thoughts of the educational subjects (i.e., individuals, the masses) in order to raise the latter's awareness of the ideal goals, the viewpoints and orientations of the educationally motivated objects to attract, gather and lead the educationally intended subjects to participate in the process of fighting for, seizing, protecting and exercising political power of the educational intended objects.

Political and ideological education for university students is a process of influencing, communicating, comprehending, and creatively applying Marxist-Leninist theory, Hồ Chí Minh's thought, the policies and guidelines of the Communist Party, the State's policies and laws, the nation's traditional values and the cultural quintessence of the times. Along with other educational activities, political and ideological education directly affects each student's thoughts, feelings, ethics, lifestyle and the ability to practice work; contributes to encouraging students to undertake creative initiatives and activate political acts. Political and ideological education contributes to the achievement of goals of universities to train generations of students to become not only proficient in their profession, but also steadfast in their ideological stance, solid political courage, revolutionary ideals, moral qualities and cultural lifestyle.

While ideological and political education for students is closely related and intersects with many other educational aspects, it mainly focuses on: socialist ideology, knowledge of Marxist-Leninist theory, Hồ Chí Minh's thought, the history

of the Communist Party of Vietnam; the lines and viewpoints of the Communist Party of Vietnam, and the policies and laws of the State; current economic, political, socio-cultural issues both domestically and internationally; patriotic tradition, national pride, revolutionary vigilance for students in the struggle to oppose and defeat all plots of hostile forces; the sense of obedience to the law, and the fighting spirit to oppose wrongs and eliminate social evils; awareness and responsibility towards the collective, citizen obligations for the cause of nation building and defense.

In Vietnam, political and ideological education for the young in general and students in particular has been given great attention by the Party, State, ministries, sectors and universities. In universities, in addition to academic education, the role of socio-political organizations and agencies is also promoted in educational activities. The Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union in universities has had many practical movements and actions to enhance education, contributing to raising the political and ideological consciousness of students. As a result, political and ideological education for students in universities in recent years has achieved significant results. The vast majority of students have a strong ideological stance and political bravery, while striving to study, and evince consistent interest in current national issues. After graduating, they have made constant efforts to establish themselves, to have stable jobs and actively contribute to promoting industrialization and modernization of the country, building and defending the socialist Vietnamese Fatherland.

However, due to various reasons, the current political and ideological education for students still has limitations. A portion of students are not fully aware of the role and meaning of studying political theory; remain idle in learning and studying Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh's thought; are lacking in awareness of the lines and guidelines of the Party, the policies and laws of the State and the sense of compliance with the rules and regulations of the Universities. They lack motivation to strive to become a party member, while being deficient in the right awareness and motivation to become a Party member. Some students have a negative attitude, and inadequate enthusiasm towards participating in social activities and in volunteering for community life; have not clearly defined their responsibilities to family and society, or even to themselves; and have a negative, pragmatic, or personal lifestyle. There are still students with weak skills, declining trust, denial of revolutionary ideals, being enticed to participate in activities that go against the lines, guidelines, and policies of the Party and State, the interests of the people; and violate the law. These manifestations clearly show the limitations in political and ideological education for students in recent years.

The reasons for limitations and inadequacies in political and ideological education for students in our country originate from many different sources, which mainly include:

– Officials at some levels of related Party committees, authorities, agencies, and university leaders are sometimes not assertive in governing and directing political and ideological education for students. Socio-political organizations and masses, especially Youth Unions and Student Unions at all levels, have not yet performed their role to the fullest extent in organizing political and ideological education activities for students.

– Education in Marxist-Leninist theory, Hồ Chí Minh's thought, the Party's line, and the State's laws in many universities are not paid due respect. There is an attitude of underestimating subjects related to this content. The curriculum and educational methods are slow in innovating, inflexible, and are not cohesive, adaptive and attractive to students. Resources to ensure students' learning are still lacking. The forces of lecturers and officials working in the management of political theory education is still deficient in quality, quantity and structure.

– The impacts of the downside of the market mechanism, the process of globalization and international integration; the resistance of hostile forces to the strategy of "peaceful evolution," particularly in the ideological and cultural spheres in order to distort the past, twist the history, besmirch the system, confuse the students, and make them waver, be disorientated and skeptical about the system.

–The students themselves are not fully aware of their positions, roles and responsibilities. They do not have sufficient bravery and determination to overcome difficulties, challenges and tribulations in order to focus on studying, cultivating and practicing their ideological skills.

In order to promote and further improve the quality and effectiveness of political and ideological education for students in universities, it is necessary to synchronously implement the following orientations and solutions:

– First: Bolster the propagation of the meaning and importance of political awareness education for students in order to raise the awareness of Party committee officials and leaders of a number of central and local agencies, departments, mass organizations, the education sector, as well as staff and lecturers at universities. This can also be done by creating dramatic changes and innovations in all stages in the process of implementing education; and by increasing investment in adequate resources and facilities for universities in educating political consciousness for students.

– Second: Continue to thoroughly disseminate, apply and deploy the content of the Party's viewpoint on political and ideological education, revolutionary ideals, morality, and cultural lifestyle for the young generation. The document of the 12th Party Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam states: "Innovating the contents and methods of political, ideological, idealistic and traditional education, fostering revolutionary ideals, patriotism, moral building, and healthy lifestyles, a sense of respect and strict observance of the Constitution and laws for the young generation. Having appropriate mechanisms and policies to create a

favorable environment and conditions for the young generation to study, research, work, entertain, develop intelligence, skills and physical strength. Encouraging and supporting the young to nurture their dreams, ambitions, assault, creativity, and mastery of modern science and technology. Promoting the role of the young generation in the cause of nation building and defense"[8]. The document of the 13th Party Congress continued to affirm: "Enhancing the education of the young generation on revolutionary ideals, morality, cultural lifestyle, raising patriotism, national pride, nurturing dreams, ambition, aspiration to reach further heights; upholding the responsibility towards the country and society"[9].

In universities, it is necessary to renew the curriculum of Marxist-Leninist theoretical subjects, Hồ Chí Minh's thought, and the revolutionary line of the Communist Party of Vietnam. This must be done keeping in mind that theory must be associated with practice, attaching importance to equipping students with knowledge about worldview and scientific methodology to establish the proper thought and solid political material for students; a teaching-learning methodology must focus on promoting the independence and positive attitude of learners while diversifying learning methods and combining classroom learning with students' self-study process.

Third: Enhance the closer and more thorough leadership and direction of the Party Committee, the University Trustees, and the University Executive Boards in political and ideological education for students. Foster the role and effective coordination of the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union, the Student Union, other socio-political organizations as well as lecturers in promoting ideological and political education for students. Because political and ideological education for students is a long, complicated process, taking place in many different environments, involving many relationships and under the influence of many forces in universities.

Fourth: Promote a positive attitude, self-discipline and proactiveness, self-education and self-discipline of students in ideological and political education. In order to "raise political awareness," students are required to cultivate both "self-education and self-disciplining." On the other hand, it is necessary to closely combine political and ideological education for students while resolutely fighting against wrong, hostile views and all manifestations of individualism. Currently, in order to achieve high quality and efficiency in political and ideological education for students, universities need to stick to the content and requirements of a directional nature in the comprehensive building and development of socialist Vietnamese that were summarized by the Resolution of the 5th Conference of the Central Committee of the Party of the VIII term, into five outstanding virtues.

Fifth: Create a healthy educational environment to positively affect students' political awareness, ideology, feelings and personality. The priority should be put on the universities' educational environment, where there are regular and direct

impacts of educational objects on students' political and ideological learning and self-discipline. Universities need to have discipline and rules regarding education. All staff, lecturers and students must always fully and strictly comply with the guidelines and policies of the Party, the State's laws and policies, and the Universities' rules and regulations. This applies especially to the staff and officials in universities, from leaders to lecturers. Staff working in academic departments must set a standard in behavior and manner, "walk the talk," and be an exemplary model for students to follow. Such a university will create a good educational environment which positively impacts students not only in terms of politics and ideology but also in all other aspects for them.

In general, political and ideological education for students today has an important position and role in the education goals of universities. In practice, along with the results, there are also many limitations and inadequacies that need synchronous and timely resolutions. The implementation of the above solutions will contribute to bringing about the quality and effectiveness of political and ideological education to students in universities, thereby creating future generations of the country who are not only good with their professional skills and levels and proficient in their profession but also have political courage and a steady ideological stance, becoming the deserved successors of the revolutionary cause of the Party and People, continuing the cause of renovation, while accelerating industrialization and modernization in the context of deeper and more extensive globalization and international integration, building and defending the socialist Vietnamese Fatherland for more and more steady development./.

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