



## HO CHI MINH'S THOUGHTS ABOUT TEACHING METHODS

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### Abstract:

It can be said that Ho Chi Minh's thoughts about the teaching methods in an attempt to develop learners' capability are really comprehensive perspectives. In order to develop learners' capability, Ho Chi Minh advocated to reform teaching methods in accord with each specific condition, as well as outlined the basic direction for human and educational development strategies at present and in the future. Ho Chi Minh's ideas about innovative teaching methods have been greatly meaningful in reforming the education and training basically and completely.

**Keywords:** thoughts, methods, capability, strategies, direction

### 1. Introduction

Education has played an important role in any era and closely related to the formation and development of human – a sustainable factor for development of society. This viewpoint emerged since the ancient times and it has been considered important in various stages of history-society. Inheriting these progressive views about education in the world and Vietnamese nation, Ho Chi Minh gave the most progressive perspectives on teaching process, which is the view towards developing learners' capability. With the scope of this article, the authors would like to delve into the content of Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on teaching methods and draw implications for the renewal of the current teaching methods at present.

## **2. Content**

### **2.1 Some basic definition**

#### **2.1.1 Definitions of teaching jobs**

Teaching is a system of continuous actions and a mutually penetrating process between teachers and learners under the guidance of teachers in order to make development in learners' personality and whereby to achieve teaching purposes. (Nguyen Thi Bich Hanh 2004, page.11)

Thus, teaching is the most typical activities at schools. It is the whole operation, which aims at conveying the entire human knowledge into learners; therefore, teaching has a task to transfer human knowledge into learners, help learners to acquire and create new knowledge basing on the achievements of former knowledge. Learners today are not only responsible for learning and memorizing available knowledge, but also having got critical thinking and creativity from the former knowledge to create new material and spiritual values and capture new knowledge. Teaching is a process including all actions which are organized and oriented to help learners step by step acquire the thinking capability and acting capability in the aim at occupying the moral values, understanding, skills, cultural values that humankind has achieved. Thus, basing on this foundation, learners are able to solve many practical problems occurring in their entire lifetime.

In other words, learning is a process of double-sided activities between teachers (teaching) and learners (learning) to implement teaching purposes. Teaching duties in schools not only ensure a certain standard of education, but also contribute to the formation of human personality. Teaching is a particular form of activity in the society in an attempt to impart and acquire social experience, so learners' personality is taken form and developed. It is movement of a double-sided activity which includes 2 different activities with different functions. They overlap and interact with each other in a certain space and time period; they are teaching and learning activities. The above viewpoint reflects two aspects of teaching process (1) to convey the knowledge of teachers and (2) to acquire the knowledge on the basis of creative thinking of learners.

These two aspects which are not separated from each other are a process of joint activities in the aim at forming new human personality which can meet the demands of the era. In this process, teachers lead as well as organize and control the conceptive activities of learners to help them discover knowledge by themselves. Teachers are also instructors who have functions to provide knowledge for learners, but only when really necessary. Coordinating with teachers' activities, learners need to be self-aware, active, proactive, self-organized and self-controlled in their receptive activities in order to master the knowledge, form the skills and techniques as well as develop their cognitive

capability, especially the ability of creative thinking. Later, learners can form the basis of scientific worldview and possess moral qualities of new human.

### 2.1.2 Definitions of teaching methods

The term "methods", in Greek is "*Méthodos*" which means path or an operation way in order to achieve certain goals. Methods closely associate with contents. Methods vary according to subjects of each study. Contents stipulate for methods, but methods themselves affect back contents and make contents develop to a new degree. Therefore, methods are a system of self-conscious actions in succession, so as to obtain the results in accordance with the intended purposes.

From the concepts above, it can be said that methods have complex structures, which include the proposed purposes, systems of actions (activities), essential means (such as material facilities, practical facilities and intellectual facilities), and *a process of transforming the subjects and the results after using methods (goal achievement)*. The author, Thai Duy Tuyen summarized the concept of "methods" in three basic types: *"In view of cybernetics, methods are how to organize receptive activities of learners and control these activities; In view of logics, methods are the logical techniques which are used to help learners grasp the knowledge, skills and techniques self-consciously; In view of the nature of the content, methods are contents' movement in teaching process"* (Thai Duy Tuyen, 2008, p. 38).

Accordingly, teaching methods are *"the way which works in the right order, the coordination and interaction between teachers and learners in the attempt to achieve teaching purposes"* (Nguyen Thi Bich Hanh, 2004, p. 70). Teaching methods manifest the working way between teachers and learners; and thanks to this process, learners can master knowledge, skills, techniques, and form their worldviews and abilities.

Teaching methods are one of important components of teaching process; the interactive ways between teachers and learners to tackle the tasks of teaching well. Teaching methods have closely organic relationship with other elements in teaching process. They are both dominated by teaching purposes and make contribution to carry out the teaching purposes. Teaching methods are set by the contents of teaching and teaching contents dominate the selection and rational application of teaching methods. The nature of advanced teaching methods which we are approaching is the roles of teachers and learners in teaching and learning activities have been changed.

In this case, learners are subjects rather than "*outsiders*" while teachers are people who organize, guide, advise and synthesize all the ideas to make the class hours take place in the right direction and reach the target.

## 2.2 Introduction about Ho Chi Minh

Ho Chi Minh<sup>1</sup> (1890 - 1969) was born and raised in the situation which Viet Nam and the world were in many troubles. Inside the nation, Vietnamese society of the nineteenth century until the French invasion in 1858 was still a feudal society with backward and depressed agricultural base. After the overthrow of Tay Son administration, Nguyen government implemented conservative and reactionary policies, enhanced exploitation, oppressed the "inside" and applied the close-door policies for the "outside" as well as refused any reformative proposals. Nguyen government gradually submitted to the invasion of France by signing the surrender treaty in turn, then admitted the protectorate of French colonialism on the whole territory of Vietnam.<sup>i</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, many armed insurrections under the slogan "Can Vương" failed, the feudal ideology system proved to be outdated compared with historical missions. Besides, the colonial exploitation of French colonialism in Vietnam caused much evolution and class differentiation; the working class, the bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie began to appear. Along with that, the reformative trend in Japan and China which swept into Vietnam gradually shifted the patriotic movement to the bourgeois democratic tendency. A typical issue of this period is the patriotic movement of some Confucian scholars who had progressive thoughts such as Phan Boi Chau, Phan Chu Trinh, Hoang Hoa Tham, etc... but all of them failed because they were neither a clear way out nor a right path. If Vietnamese people desired to win in the national salvation movement, we would follow a new path. Especially, in education, we must respect and carry out the reform in the ways of teaching and learning to free Vietnamese people out of illiteracy and lack of education.

While Vietnam society met many difficulties, the world also had to cope with a variety of tremendous changes in this stage. Imperialism became the joint enemy of colonial people. In the process of invasion, feudal exploitation was maintained and embracing the whole of it was the capitalist exploitation, which led to the emergence of new classes - the working class and the bourgeoisie class. Especially, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a world revolutionary high-tide broke out with the pinnacle as the October Revolution of 1917. That victory overthrew the bourgeois state, set Soviet government, "awakened Asian peoples", and opened up the era

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<sup>1</sup> Ho Chi Minh is a national liberation hero, a founder of Communist Party of Vietnam, one of the founders and leaders of the struggle for independence and territorial integrity of Vietnam in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as an international communist soldier. He is also a writer and a person who read the Declaration of Independence Vietnam to register a birth of Vietnam as the Democratic Republic nation on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945 at Ba Dinh Square, Hanoi. He was the Prime Minister of Democratic Republic of Vietnam during 1945- 1969.

of anti-imperialist revolution and national liberation. Most importantly, many colonies were liberated, then formed a number of independent nations and led to the birth of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (1922), the Communist International (March 1919). Workers' movement in many capitalist Western countries and national liberation movement in the Eastern colonies more and more linked more closely with each other in fighting the joint enemy, imperialism.

In the journey to find a way to liberate Vietnamese country, Ho Chi Minh witnessed the extreme plight of people who were suppressed and colonized. Thus, he desired to find out the way to free oppressed people in general and Vietnamese people in particular. And studying Lenin's thesis helped him find the right way for the national salvation and people liberation from foreign invaders as well as illiterate invaders.

### **2.3 Ho Chi Minh thoughts about teaching methods in order to develop learners' capacities**

Ho Chi Minh thoughts on teaching methods were formed under the impact and influence of historical - social conditions of our nation and the times when Ho Chi Minh lived and worked. That is the inheritance and creative application in innovative teaching methods of inland and foreign educators:

a) *In order to promote learners' capability, we should apply theory into practice - learning must be accompanied by practice.* Ho Chi Minh said that innovative teaching methods must closely unite theory with practice. This viewpoint is considered the foundation for fulfilling innovative teaching methods. This view of learning with practice will help learners develop in a comprehensive way. In order to achieve this goal, teachers must guide learners to be aware of their learning. Only when the learners associate their learning with a positive motivation, their learning process will become easier. Ho Chi Minh emphasized that learning is not only the rights but also the obligations towards society, as well as the moral obligation of everyone. According to Ho Chi Minh, theory *"is the summation of human experience and knowledge about nature and society, which have been built up during history"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 8, p. 497). When mastering the theory, we must manipulate it into practice to see if it is right or wrong, because the reality is the measure of the truth.

*In Ho Chi Minh's opinion, the thoughts which theory must associate with practice were always upheld.* So, he reminded us of treasuring the learning of theory, *"theory is as a guideline, it gives us the direction in our practical work"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 5, p. 233). He had drastically criticized the teaching methods which just stop at teaching theory and do not apply theory into reality. Ho Chi Minh also emphasized that when finishing a tertiary program, anyone maybe has knowledge, but if they cannot utilize their knowledge into practical work, they will know a half. Their understanding is just

bookish not an all-sided one. If we wish to become fully knowledgeable people, we have to employ our knowledge into practical conditions. To encourage the learners, Ho Chi Minh said, *"Pupils should not learn by rote or cram for an exam ... Learning is thinking, linking with practice, experimenting and practicing, learning must be accompanied by practice"* (Ho Chi Minh in 2000, vol. 11, p.331). Innovative teaching methods are able to help students apply what they learn into practice as much as they can; words must accord with deeds. Implementation of this idea is how to employ innovative teaching methods actively. Thus, learners can study anytime, anywhere.

Good teaching methods can train learners to be not only proficient at both cultural and scientific aspects but also professional abilities' and skills. However, the knowledge that they acquire is not only dogmas in books but can help learners be able to apply their knowledge into life. Education must train all-sided people to serve the renovation and construction of the new society. Teaching methods do not just stop at equipping learners with basic knowledge but also train them to become people who are diligent, painstaking, and later become good citizens who willingly participate in building a new life and a new society. According to Ho Chi Minh, practice is the best measure of human understanding about the world. Teaching is to make learners understand that *"through failure, people can get experience to adjust their thoughts about objective rules, then change failure into success"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 6, p. 248).

Ho Chi Minh underlined that *"practice is the foundation of theory and theory serves practice in turn. Practice is the sole standard of the truth"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 6, p.249). Therefore, *"learning means reviewing old lessons and acquiring new ones. Without reviewing old lessons, learners will forget these things"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 7, p.223).

Ho Chi Minh believed that if teachers wish to develop learners' capability, they must have teaching plans. Then, they carry out these plans step by step, and offer a range of methods accordingly depending on each learner. But no matter what methods applied teachers have to perform them from starter to advanced, from simple to complex. That means we need to focus on building the teams of teachers; besides, we must strongly improve supervisory jobs, assess the learning outcomes on the basis of comprehensive foundation, and check learners' capability in applying theory into practice.

b) *In order to develop learners' capability, Ho Chi Minh claimed that teachers need to have teaching methods which are appropriate with learners, equivalent and learner-centered.* Ho Chi Minh said that *"Whatever the big or small things, we must consider them clearly, and make them be in accord with educational level, living habits, level of enlightenment, struggling experience, aspiration, desires and practical situations of people"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 6, p.248). In order to apply effective teaching methods and encourage the learners' ability, teachers must find out about characteristics of each learner so that they can offer

suitable teaching methods. With this viewpoint, Ho Chi Minh initiated a teaching perspective which is consistent with subjects and equivalent to learners.

Ho Chi Minh always held student-centered aspect in high esteem in teaching jobs. *"University education means that students can combine scientific theory with practice, try to acquire advanced science achievements and theory of our partner countries and co-ordinate these results with the reality of our country in order to make a practical contribution to the work of building our country. High school education needs to ensure that students can acquire knowledge which is basic, general, practical and suitable for current and future demands of national construction, then some unnecessary portions are left for real life. Primary education needs to teach pupils to love their homeland, people, labor, science and protect public property. Teachers should be gentle and cheerful, and do not require children to follow the framework of adults. Teachers must pay special attention to preserve their pupils' health"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 8, p. 81). In order to apply suitable teaching methods to each subject, the class management must also be appropriate, *"If there are too many learners in each class, teaching and learning jobs are less effective due to the different levels of learners, so they cannot acquire the lesson similarly. Besides, the levels of learners in practical work are diverse, so the curricula do not match them"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 6, p.52). The viewpoint which promotes learners' capability shows that Ho Chi Minh always takes learners-centered as a guideline on the selection of suitable contents and teaching methods.

c) *In order to help develop learners' capability, Ho Chi Minh emphasized that teachers must have their teaching methods to instruct their learners about self-learning, self-researching and longlife learning. Inheriting the viewpoint of Lenin: "study more and more", Ho Chi Minh wished to remind everyone that studying never ends and do study as much as we can. Therefore, "researching-learning method is a lifelong work. We must attach theory with practical work all our life. No one can admit that they know enough or know it all. The world today has renewed, our people have been increasingly progressive. So we must continue to learn and practise to improve ourselves"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 8, p.215). Ho Chi Minh affirmed that *"training in schools is only a part of education; learners need training by the social education as well as their families to help the education at schools be better. Lacking education in families and in the society, the learners' outcomes have no entire effect even the education at schools is good to a certain extent"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol 8, p.394). By this perspective about teaching method, people can learn from each other and learn anywhere.

d) *Ho Chi Minh said that in order to encourage learners to study, teachers themselves must be aware of setting a good example for learners. Ho Chi Minh thought that education must particularly focus on training morals and talent to learners. Teachers do not just stop at teaching literacy, but also teach learners how to become good people. In order to do that "...teachers who themselves are righteous can help other people be righteous, if teachers who*

*are not righteous but require the others to be righteous are reasonless*" (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 5, p.644). Ho Chi Minh concentrated his attention on teachers who need to train themselves to set a good example for learners because *"for learners, a living example is worth more than a hundred of propagandist speeches"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 1, p.263). Taking good people or work as example must be conformable with the national mentality and inherent traditions of Vietnamese people. Ho Chi Minh advised: *"...taking good people and deeds every day as an example for mutual education is one of the best ways to build the Party and revolutionary organizations as well as build new people, new life"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 12, p. 558).

e) *Teaching methods of teachers should aim at intellectual development, creative, independence and proactive quality of learners.* Ho Chi Minh advocated that *"teachers must help learners acquire knowledge on their own, practice their skills, techniques and develop independent working ability and creativity of learners. Innovative teaching and learning process need to pay attention to learner's interests, demands and benefits of society. Teachers and students should work on every problem together; anyone has any opinions can express these ideas honestly. Anything which is not understood thoroughly can be raised and conferred with each other until finding out the solutions"* (Ho Chi Minh 2000, vol. 7, p.456). In the process of teaching, teachers should avoid the imposition on learners and need to organize, guide and encourage them in order to promote the constructive and self-aware quality of learners.

## **2.4 The meaning of Ho Chi Minh's thoughts about teaching methods in order to develop learners' capability**

Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on teaching methods which aim at developing learners' capability are not only valuable on the age and humanity but also have important implications in the construction and development of Vietnam education at present.

*In teaching process, teachers have to determine what learning motivations for learners are.* With the concepts that the teachers have teaching methods, learners have learning motivation; learners will naturally have passion on learning and self-learning. This is a progressive point of view in an attempt to expand people's knowledge, foster moral qualities for all people and to be a long-life quality.

*Teachers can develop learners' capability by equipping learners with self-learning and teamwork methods.* In education, Ho Chi Minh always focused on the development of human capability in the form of guiding them to work independently and work in group. Ho Chi Minh's thoughts about teaching methods are to focus on all aspects, from knowledge to virtue; self-learning from books to society and in work. These educational tasks are extremely basic, inextricably linked to each other and to be the basis for the development of Vietnamese people today.



*Ho Chi Minh said that apart from vocational training, good teaching methods aim to teach people to be human-being.* According to him, people do not suddenly have got moral qualities from the Heaven but they must fight, practice, develop and consolidate daily and enduringly to acquire themselves, as well as the more sharpen, the brighter jewels are; the more refined, the purer the gold is. With considerably profound thoughts on teaching methods and educating comprehensive people, Ho Chi Minh's thoughts also have practical and significant meaning in outlining the strategies in developing sustainable human resources for Vietnam.

*Within thoughts about teaching methods aiming to promote learners' capability, Ho Chi Minh paid great attention to setting good examples issue.* Through teaching process, whether teachers apply any teaching methods, setting good examples by themselves remains crucial. Nowadays, we have always given prominence to learner-centered issue in teaching process but the roles of teachers are not faded for that reason. When teachers shape and organize the classroom, they will positively impact on their learners. Teachers direct and teach learners the way how to learn by themselves and how to apply their knowledge into practice more scientifically. Teachers are the direct mirrors for learners in their self-training process.

### **3. Conclusion**

Ho Chi Minh's thoughts about teaching methods aiming to promote learners' capability is described as an ideology which teachers must be aware of applying flexible and suitable teaching methods for each level of learners. Teaching methods according to Ho Chi Minh's thoughts are very close, practical and simple to implement. Learners have equal rights and be able to learn mutually. Depending on what sort of learners, teachers can offer the appropriate forms and conformable teaching methods. Ho Chi Minh's ideology of teaching methods not only aims at conveying knowledge, enabling people to study and promote their dynamism and creativity in awareness and practice, but also helping people better to control themselves and society. His thoughts about teaching methods aim at developing all-sided people. Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on teaching methods which tend to develop learners' capability not only are valuable on the times and humanity but also draw important implications in the construction and development of Vietnamese education system such as; *teaching methods have to be comprehensive* and help learners achieve their learning goals, which are learning is to be human-being, learning is to work and learning is to cultivate people's morality. This idea not only expresses valuable traditions of our nation, but also reflects the urgent and long-term requirements of our country in the process of going up to the socialism; *to renew teaching methods successfully, Vietnamese education system requires so many kinds of*

*reform which includes the radical reform on educational qualities, teams of teachers and educational managers.*

Today, in teaching and learning process, learners hold the centered role, but the roles of teachers are not faded away, but also greatly significant. When teachers shape and organize the classroom, they will positively impact on their learners. Teachers direct and teach learners the way how to learn by themselves and how to apply their knowledge into practice more scientifically. In addition, educational managers must continue to raise their awareness, creative thinking and working style, improve the working environment and the quality of assessment and management of staff.

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