



## FROM NGUYEN AI QUOC'S POLITICAL TRAINING CLASS IN GUANGZHOU (CHINA) TO LESSONS FOR INNOVATION IN CURRENT TEACHING METHODS

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### Abstract:

Ho Chi Minh's ideology is a system of comprehensive views on the Vietnamese revolution. Among these views, the content of his ideology on education has great theoretical and practical significance for the education sector. From inheriting national traditions to absorbing the quintessence of human culture on the basis of Marxism-Leninism, teacher Vuong applied that ideology to the politics class in Guangzhou (China). Although his study time was short, Nguyen Ai Quoc trained a generation of core cadres for the Vietnamese Revolution. Nearly a century has passed, but his content and methods of education still have special significance for innovating teaching methods in the education sector in the current context of international integration.

**Keywords:** politics, Nguyen Ai Quoc, education, innovation

### 1. From the Political Training Class in Guangzhou (China)

At the end of 1924, Nguyen Ai Quoc took the name Ly Thuy and went to Guangzhou with the task of being an interpreter for Mr. M.M. Borodin, Head of the Soviet Government's advisory delegation with Sun Yat-sen's Government of the Republic of China to monitor the peasant movement of Guangdong province (China). Based on contact with the group of Vietnamese patriotic youth in the "Tam Tam Commune" organization, Nguyen Ai Quoc selected a number of outstanding members to form the Communist Youth Union group and in June 1925, it developed into "The Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League", and at the same time opened a "Propaganda School" for political training, as well as guiding students in practicing propaganda methods so that *"from there, a communist baby bird will hatch"* (Communist Party).

With the secret help of the Communist Party of China and the Revolutionary Government in Guangzhou, from early 1926 to April 1927, the Vietnamese Revolutionary

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Youth League organized revolutionary political training for young people. Vietnam's elite youth at their headquarters at No. 13 and 13B Van Minh Street (now No. 248 and 250) opposite Zhongshan University (now Guangzhou Revolutionary Museum), Nguyen Ai Quoc directly opened three revolutionary political training classes for Vietnam's elite youth.

## **2. Participants in the Class**

The main instructor of the training class is teacher Vuong (another name for Nguyen Ai Quoc), Ho Tung Mau and Le Hong Son are assistant instructors. There are also a number of lecturers from the Communist Party of China and the Soviet Union such as M.M. Borodin and his wife, Lieu Trong Khai.

The students are patriotic Vietnamese youth living in Guangzhou and young people living in foreign countries. They are students, workers, and intellectuals, some of whom are Confucian scholars.

The training program includes theoretical and practical content on revolution.

### **2.1 The Teaching Content**

Learning from the experience of previous patriotic organizations and not properly appreciating the role of *pioneering theory*, teacher Vuong required the students to take to heart Lenin's teachings: "There is no revolutionary theory, there is no revolutionary movement... Only according to the theory of revolutionary vanguard can the revolutionary party realize its responsibility of revolutionary vanguard". If we want the revolutionary party to have a pioneering revolutionary theory, each cadre in that party must master the content of the pioneering theory. Only then will it be easier to transform the Party's policies and penetrate the masses and to be able to lead the masses to carry out the tasks set by history. In addition to proletarian revolutionary theory, what knowledge are students equipped with about revolution? There are several types of revolutions: American Revolution, French Revolution, Russian October Revolution, Three Peopleism, Anarchism, Communism; What is international? There have been several internationals: First, Second, Third International; Governments: Constitutional, parliamentary, commissioner system; Organizations: International Women's, International Youth, International Workers, International Farmers, International Red Relief; Mass organizations: Trade Union, Agricultural Association... Through class lectures, teacher Nguyen Ai Quoc analyzes and compares to help students deeply be aware of the radical and thorough nature of the revolution. Russia's October Revolution compared with the English, French, and American bourgeois revolutions, thereby choosing the path of the Vietnamese revolution: National independence associated with socialism. These contents were later collected in the book *The Revolutionary Road* (Duong Kach menh) published by the Propaganda Department Of The Union Of Oppressed Peoples In East Asia In 1927.

## 2.2 Teaching Methods

The new and rich learning content attracted the students' passion, but perhaps the strongest attraction for them was Mr. Vuong's lively, attractive, and practical lectures. With a good teaching method, Mr. Vuong flexibly combines theory with practice, uses numbers to demonstrate and explain complex issues, makes students understand deeply, remember for a long time, and practice well.

In addition to learning the theory, students must also practice giving speeches and explaining political issues to others according to the following requirements: The speaker must use language appropriate to the listener; The speaker must choose a way to attract the listener, therefore, the speaker needs to have a warm, inspiring voice, know how to pose simple problems before moving on to complex issues, that is, know how to lead listener; The speech must be easy to understand. To do that, the speaker needs to speak clearly, concisely, simply, with a first and second sentence, and must avoid stuttering and redundancy. The speech must be appropriate to each situation. It is necessary to give clear examples and proofs. For example, if the French are like a knife, a cutting board, and our people are like a fish or a piece of meat, all listeners will understand that the French are the arch-enemies of the Vietnamese people. In all cases, the speaker must always be truthful and never misrepresent the truth.

After class, students can visit the revolutionary facilities in Guangzhou, such as Hoang Hoa Cuong where there are 72 graves of patriotic martyrs who died in the Tan Hoi Revolution, the grave of Pham Hong Thai, participating in rallies and marches to demonstrate the might of the revolutionary masses, and strikes of workers in Guangzhou, Hong Kong are taking place continuously in a fiery revolutionary atmosphere.

## 2.3 Learning Results

During the period from early 1926 to April 1927, Nguyen Ai Quoc was directly in charge and taught 3 classes with 75 students. The first class was opened around the beginning of 1926. According to Nguyen Ai Quoc's report to the Communist International on June 3, 1926, *"The students were secretly taken to Guangzhou. After a month and a half of studying, they returned to their country. The first course has 10 students, the second course will open next July with about 30 people..."* According to Ho Tung Mau's memoirs, attending Course I were comrades: *"Ngo Chinh Quoc, Le Loi (ie Le Duy Diem), Vu Nam Hong, Ly Mong Son, four others who only remember their names: Ngo, Truong, Chu, Hoang and a number of other comrades. The class was led by Nguyen Ai Quoc and Lam Duc Thu, in addition to lecturers from the fraternal Communist Party. In English, Nguyen translated, and in Chinese, Lam translated. Ho Tung Mau himself often came to listen."* From mid-1926 to early 1927, Nguyen Ai Quoc opened two more classes with more than 30 people in each class. Students who graduate from the course are admitted to the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League. And, the headquarters at 13 Van Minh Street truly became an important advocacy center, with decisive significance for the revolutionary process of national liberation in Vietnam.

### 3. Lessons for Innovating Current Teaching Methods

Born into a family of Confucian scholars who valued learning, President Ho Chi Minh himself was also a teacher. He is always interested in education and training, and considers *"education as the top policy"*. At the same time, he has new, ahead-of-time thinking about education. Teaching activities at the political training class in Guangzhou (China) have proven that. Although nearly a century has passed, his teaching content and methods still have great significance for the country's development in general and the innovation of teaching methods in the education sector in particular.

#### 3.1 The Role of Education

Talking about the role of education, President Ho Chi Minh still has his own way of evaluating his arguments. For President Ho Chi Minh, the role of education is often associated with other analyses related to activities taking place in life. Thanks to that, the role of education always has practical significance, specifically, education must be associated with the country's goals and tasks in each revolutionary period. That is the creativity in his thought. Therefore, right from the time he taught at Duc Thanh school - Phan Thiet, teacher Nguyen Tat Thanh confided to his students: *"I think we learn to know the right things in life and in my opinion, first of all, we learn to know and do things that benefit the country and the people."* Broadly speaking, *"Study to work, to be a human being, to be an officer, to serve groups, classes, and people, the Fatherland and humanity."*

In the politics class in Guangzhou, in the first part of the teaching materials, Nguyen Ai Quoc clearly posed the question of why we must make a revolution if we want to live, and why revolution is a common thing of the people, not the work of one or two people. He wrote: *"For more than sixty years now, French imperialism has been on its head; More than twenty million compatriots are dying in the death zone". "This book only wishes that after reading it, people will think again, after thinking about it, they will wake up, and after waking up, they will stand up and unite to make a revolution."* *"If the revolution is to succeed, the people (workers and peasants) must be the base, there must be a strong party, there must be perseverance, there must be sacrifice, there must be unity."* It is very clear that "The Revolutionary Road (Duong Kach menh)" has resolved most of the "bottlenecks" of serious crises in both revolutionary guidelines and methods, especially the crisis in revolutionary organization of the domestic revolutionary movement. Through "The Revolutionary Road", students realize that *"To save the country and liberate the nation, there is no other path than the path of the proletarian revolution"* and *"Nowadays there are many doctrines, many isms, but the most correct, the most certain, the most revolutionary is Leninism"*. Later, President Ho Chi Minh repeatedly pointed out that the role of education is to comprehensively develop people to help live and serve the Fatherland and people.

Thus, we see that his educational purpose is directed towards the common thing which is the development of all sectors, for the benefit of the people and the country. That purpose comes from his method of thinking about individual and social relationships, parts and the whole. Accordingly, individuals - parts must aim for the benefit of society

- the whole. Because when the water (the whole) rises, only then can the boat (parts) rise. The purpose of education that he taught was not just a theory, but it was also his purpose, his whole life aimed at achieving it for the country and the people. That's why in the "Eulogy" of the Central Executive Committee of the Vietnam Labor Party read at his memorial service (September 9, 1969), it was written: *"He made our nation, our people, and the mountains and rivers of our country."*

### **3.2 Content of Education**

President Ho Chi Minh said that education must be comprehensive. Comprehensive education, according to him, includes physical education, intellectual education, aesthetic education, moral education, and a combination of the above contents. The above contents of education were summarized by President Ho Chi Minh in the two words "talent" and "morality". According to him, knowledge is very necessary, but morality plays an equally important role. He pointed out: *"Teaching and learning must focus on both talent and virtue. Virtue is revolutionary morality. Without revolutionary morality, talent is useless."* That is why in the book *The Revolutionary Road* (Duong Kach menh), on the first page, Nguyen Ai Quoc raised the issue of morality and conduct of revolutionary cadres. Why did he put the issue of morality and character as revolutionaries first and foremost? Because, with the political vision of a professional revolutionary, he soon realized that this was the root of all problems. People who want to send cadres to work in the revolution must first be imbued with the morality of being a revolutionary. Once this problem is equipped in your mind, all other difficulties and problems will be removed. This is the root of the cadre.

On the other hand, the content of education according to Ho Chi Minh's ideology needs to be suitable for each different subject, only then can it achieve maximum effectiveness in education. In the classroom in Guangzhou, the students were patriotic Vietnamese youth. Through contact, he realized that they were young people influenced by Western education, students, teachers, officials, children, and grandchildren of well-off families, but almost no one was a worker or poor farmer. They are all patriotic and *"determined to do their best to do everything to restore the human rights of the Vietnamese people"* but they have different perceptions about establishing organizations and methods to save the country, leading to different trends of saving the country. Therefore, in a letter to the President of the Communist International Union, Nguyen Ai Quoc wrote: *"I will train them on organizational methods... At this time, this is the only solution."*

The curriculum of the political training class in Guangzhou is quite rich, including issues of the world revolution, Vietnamese revolution, and revolutionary mobilization methods. Regarding the world revolution, Nguyen Ai Quoc drew from the lessons of the Russian October Revolution, thereby predicting the development of the colonial revolution and national liberation revolution. Regarding the Vietnamese revolution, his lectures aimed to condemn French colonialism's invasion of Vietnam and pointed out that the main revolutionary forces were the working class and the peasantry. He criticized the movements to fight for the liberation of the Vietnamese nation led by

patriots in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Regarding revolutionary mobilization methods, there are articles on propaganda, organization, and mobilization of workers, farmers, young people, and women.

The learning content focuses on the following subjects: human evolutionary history, mainly focusing on research from the period of development of capitalism into imperialism; History of liberation struggles of some countries such as China, India, North Korea; Vietnam history; History of the Communist International; History of the Russian October Revolution; Gandhi, Three Peopleism, especially Marxism-Leninism. The method of mobilizing the masses to fight is one of the important contents that Nguyen Ai Quoc conveyed to students.

It can be seen that the educational content he offered was very dialectical. That is the result of applying a thinking methodology drawn from the law of quantity and quality. For each different subject, the learning content at different high and low levels is appropriate to the psychology and physiology of each age group. Besides, he also noted that the educational content must follow the principle of "*quality is more important than quantity*".

### **3.3 Educational Methods**

President Ho Chi Minh attached great importance to educational methods. He emphasized that if you want to have good learning results, you must have the right educational method. The goal is to make learners have a positive and self-disciplined attitude to learning and practice, thus absorbing new educational content quickly and effectively.

Right from his teaching days at Duc Thanh School (Phan Thiet), President Ho Chi Minh paid attention to applying the educational method "*learning must be associated with thinking, learning must be related to reality, learning and practice must be combined together.*" He analyzed: "*Theory must be put into practice. Practice must follow theory. The reasoning is like a name (or bullet). Practice is like a target to shoot at. Having arrows but not shooting, or shooting haphazardly, is the same as not having arrows. Theory is meant to be applied in practice. Just memorizing it to impress the world is useless. Therefore, we must try to learn, and at the same time, we must practice.*"

At the political training class, Nguyen Ai Quoc directly organized and led the class, and was also the main lecturer of the classes. Students attending these political training classes all agreed that, among the lecturers, Nguyen Ai Quoc was very knowledgeable in theory and practice. He skillfully combined theory with practice, evoking new thoughts about the current situation, thereby leading to correct awareness and direction. When teaching, teacher Vuong often applied the comparison method and paid close attention to numbers to prove things. Through numbers, he explained complex issues, making them easy for students to understand and remember. People think that numbers are very effective, because they are real documents, making people see the truth. Once, he reminded V.I. Lenin of the saying: farmers believe in numbers more than theories. Another method that Nguyen Ai Quoc applied while lecturing is to regularly

exchange between lecturers and students. Questions and answers are frequently applied by him. Thanks to his good teaching method, the students, despite their different levels and awareness, all understood the basic issues of Marxist-Leninist theory and the Vietnamese national liberation movement.

The organization of classes is also very strict. Each class sets up groups with a leader in charge. Each student must write a "will statement", clearly stating his or her career, motivation for participating in the class, and promises to return to the country when he finishes studying and mobilize the masses to fight and build a revolutionary movement. In addition to paying attention to lectures, after each week of class, there are "learning reports" in the small groups. Students must report on the theory they have learned and write a "study paper". During the learning process, criticism and self-criticism often took place. After each lecture, students were divided into groups to discuss and discuss issues about the Vietnamese revolution that had to be resolved. In addition, students must practice giving speeches and giving advocacy lectures. In his memoirs, Le Manh Trinh - a trainee wrote: *"Each of us had to play the role of propagandist, the others sat, listened and asked questions. Then we commented on the presentation and questions."* Thereby, despite different levels and different perceptions, the students all understand the basic issues of Marxist-Leninist theory and the Vietnamese national liberation movement. In addition, students also participate in writing wall newspapers, learning about culture, foreign languages, and doing practical research. According to Nguyen Luong Bang's documents (handwritten and typed copies), in addition to political training hours, Nguyen Ai Quoc also taught students culture, Chinese, and English. According to him, cultural and foreign language skills will help a lot in absorbing theory and politics, and will especially help a lot in professional work. Officials cannot help but have high cultural and foreign language skills.

At the end of the course, most students were sent back home to work, propagate revolutionary theories, and build organizations for the Association. The luggage on the way back to the country of these young people was the advice of Mr. Vuong: To carry out the two tasks of anti-imperialist and anti-feudal movements... we must consider our revolutionary cause as the cause of the masses and consider the workers and peasants the root of the revolution. It is necessary to mingle with the masses of workers and peasants, to propagate Marxism-Leninism, educate the Party's guidelines, and lead the masses to fight. And, it was through the Proletarianization movement that the "red seeds" multiplied revolutionary nuclei to serve the cause of national liberation.

#### **4. A Few Comments**

Currently, in the process of international integration, Vietnam has basic favorable factors such as a stable political system, and people who are eager to contribute to the country's development. However, Vietnam also faces many difficulties, challenges, such as in some places, the ecological environment is polluted, natural resources are increasingly depleted, social security and community health have not improved as expected, the gap

between rich and poor people increases, social evils, and social crimes become more complex. Meanwhile, the world context is unstable and competition between countries and peoples for development is becoming increasingly fierce. In addition, social morality in many places is tending to decline, reflected in everyday behavior. This further shows that to bring the country to develop quickly and sustainably on the socialist path, there is nothing better than building the country based on human development. People with enough qualities and abilities must be the ones who use their own hands and brains to build the country and help our nation develop in the trend of global integration. Therefore, *"Education and training along with science and technology are the top national policies and the key driving force for national development"*.

With a vision beyond his time, President Ho Chi Minh commented: *"The more society moves forward, the more work there is, the more sophisticated the machines become. If you refuse to learn, you will be backward, and to be backward is to be eliminated"*, so his thoughts on education are a system of rich, profound and comprehensive views aimed at training students useful citizens for the country and to develop learners' existing abilities. Therefore, Ho Chi Minh's ideology on education is an important basis for the Party to propose a direction for educational development at the 13th Congress (January 2021), which is *"Building synchronous institutions and policies to effectively implement effectiveness of education and training policies"*, and at the same time *"Continue to synchronously innovate goals, contents, programs, and methods of education and training in the direction of modernity, international integration, and comprehensive human development, meeting new requirements of socio-economic development, science and technology, adapting to the Fourth Industrial Revolution"*, to build people and generations of passionately attached to the ideals of national independence and socialism, with pure morality, and a strong will to build and protect the Fatherland; industrialize and modernize the country; preserve and promote the nation's cultural values, have the capacity to absorb the quintessence of human culture; promote the potential of the Vietnamese people, have community awareness and promote individual positivity, master modern scientific and technological knowledge, have creative thinking, and have practical skills good practice, industrial style, and disciplined organization; have good health, are the heirs to building socialism that is both "intelligent" and "moral" as Uncle Ho advised.

Besides, Ho Chi Minh's ideology on education is not only timeless but also beyond Vietnam's borders, reaching the world. In 1996, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proposed four pillars of education worldwide in the 21st century, which are *"learning to know, learning to work, learning to live together and learning to be human"*. These four pillars can be seen as the purpose and ideology of education for the entire world in the 21st century. Coincidentally, the content of Ho Chi Minh's education is very close to UNESCO's 4 pillars of education: 1) Learning to know, providing the cognitive tools needed to understand the world better, with a foundation sufficient and appropriate knowledge base to study well in the future. 2) Learning to work, providing skills that help each person participate effectively and actively in the global economy and society. 3) Learning to live together, providing analytical abilities



and social skills to help each person maximize their potential in all aspects, becoming a comprehensive person. 4) Learning to be human, guiding each person to understand the hidden value of democracy, between cultures to respect and live together in peace and harmony at all levels of society. Thereby showing the vision and progress beyond the times in both space and time in Ho Chi Minh's educational ideology.

## **5. Conclusion**

Although born many decades ago, the contents and methods of Ho Chi Minh's ideology on education that he implemented in the political training class in Guangzhou from 1925 to 1927 are still very meaningful to the national construction in general and educational development in particular in our country today. We not only find suggestions in his thoughts to solve specific problems about the role and content of education... but we can also learn from them the methodology to solve the problem. These methods are very close to what is being talked about today, such as the goal of education is to train Vietnamese people to develop comprehensively, with ethics, knowledge, health, aesthetics, and career to adhere to the ideals of national independence and socialism; form and foster the personality, qualities, and abilities of citizens, meeting the requirements of the cause of building and protecting the Fatherland. Educational activities must be carried out according to the principle of learning coupled with practice, education combined with productive labor, theory associated with practice, school education combined with family education, and social education. We fully believe that Ho Chi Minh's ideology on education, which contributed to the victory of the Vietnamese revolution in history, will continue to be effective in the context of the country's accelerated industrialization, modernization, and international integration.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author(s)**

Nguyen Thi Nhu Quynh, a lecturer at University of Economics and Business Administration, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam, is currently doing a research on innovation in current teaching methods with lessons from President Ho Chi Minh's political training class in Guangzhou (China) in early 1900s.

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