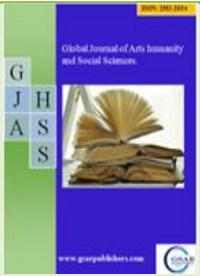
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Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on the teaching profession

By

Lam Ngoc Linh

The University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.



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Corresponding author

Lam Ngoc Linh

Abstract

"Bathed in the radiant glory of the sunlight, no profession stands more noble than the vocation of teaching" (J. A. Comenius). Since antiquity, the teaching vocation has been regarded with the highest esteem - as the vocation that nurtures the future of the nation and yields the fruit of life. Given the immense significance of education in general and the teacher in particular, President Ho Chi Minh articulated his admiration with eloquence, calling educators "unsung heroes". He delineated the moral standards essential for teachers: a deep devotion to the profession; pedagogical and research creativity; mastery of subject - matter; and upholding personal integrity, ethical conduct, and a respectful lifestyle. Teachers should show affection toward students, solidarity with colleagues, and respect for the people. Above all, Ho Chi Minh insisted that each educator must possess steadfast political conviction. In the contemporary era of rapid scientific and technological transformation, educators face multifaceted pressures. Thus, the study of Ho Chi Minh's educational thought holds profound practical relevance in shaping Vietnam's teaching workforce today.

Keywords: Ho Chi Minh, teacher, ethics, thought, teaching, ...

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant and profound contributions of President Ho Chi Minh - the revolutionary teacher who dedicated his entire life to the nation and the people - is his ideology regarding the teaching profession. His life, career, and above all his thoughts on education and teaching, did not emerge by chance; rather, they are the result of deliberate reflection and insight shaped in response to the profound transformations unfolding in the history of the Vietnamese nation.

1. CONTENT

1.1. Ho Chi Minh's Ideology on the Teaching Profession

According to the theoretical framework of Marxism - Leninism, in the dialectical relationship between humans and the majestic natural world, labor serves as the fundamental force that draws people closer, forms social relationships, and gradually enables individuals to perfect themselves. In other words, through active labor, human beings continuously create material wealth, enhance both their physical and spiritual lives, and meet their essential needs.

From this general Marxist-Leninist theory, President Ho Chi Minh emphasized that the construction of socialism can only be successfully realized through "the full awareness and creative labor of tens of millions of people" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 11, p. 93). Among those tens of millions, the contributions of teachers are especially significant and cannot be overlooked. Throughout his works, Ho Chi Minh employed various terms such as "female teacher" (*cô giáo*), "male teacher" (*thầy giáo*), "the educator," "instructor," "education soldier", etc. All of which, fundamentally, refer to teachers as unsung heroes dedicated to the cause of "cultivating people."

Ho Chi Minh honoured the teaching profession and placed teachers in a highly respected and noble position within society. Consequently, teaching is imbued with a glorious mission - a mission that can only be fulfilled if a teacher sees herself not merely as someone who "banging heads to feed themselves", but as a mentor entrusted with shaping progressive citizens. As President Ho Chi Minh emphasized, "if one has professional skill but lacks good political education, even if one is brilliant academically, one fails with children. Politics is the soul, professional knowledge the body. Having skill without political conviction is like having a soulless body. One must have politics

first, then professional expertise". Therefore, teachers must continuously cultivate their revolutionary ethics, relentlessly refine their professional competence, and serve as shining examples for their students. They should be impeccable in both words and deeds, caring for their students with the devotion of a parent and loving the profession wholeheartedly. A true teacher not only loves the school and the work, but also commits to lifelong learning to continually improve. Indeed, as Ho Chi Minh counseled, educators must "cherish the children like one's own sons and daughters".

It can be said that the teaching-learning process requires the close coordination between teachers and students. In his *Speech at the Political Training Class for Teachers* in August 1959, Ho Chi Minh affirmed that teachers are responsible for educating progressive citizens and cadres for the nation, and that they must clearly recognize their role: whether students turn out good or bad depends on whether the teachers are good or bad. This viewpoint was later inherited, expanded, and incorporated in the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, which called for reforms to build a progressive educational consciousness. Reality has shown that there can be no society without education, which also means there can be no enlightened leadership or ideal role models for the younger generation to follow. To materialize the spirit of innovation and creativity in education, teachers today strive to uphold a "learner-centered approach" to promote active learning. This principle aligns with the educational philosophies of many countries around the world and reflects Vietnam's growing educational integration with the international community.

Within the realm of educational administration, President Ho Chi Minh illuminated a profound principle: one must recognize the pivotal importance of education, viewing it not merely as a technical field but as the people's cause and a task entrusted to the entire Party and the whole nation. In practice, he urged administrators to delve into investigative research and systematically draw on practical experience; to develop policy directions that are concrete, practical, and sound; and to closely align the Central leadership's policies with the rich, valuable experiences of the masses, local cadres, and communities. Turning to students, in his inaugural *"Letter to Students"* written during the opening term in September 1945, President Ho encouraged pupils to study diligently for the honor of the nation, reminding them of the historical struggle: "After eighty years of slavery that weakened our country, we now need to rebuild the legacy left by our ancestors so that we may catch up with other nations of the world. In this great mission of national reconstruction, the country places many hopes on you. Whether the rivers and mountains of Vietnam become beautiful, and whether our people can step onto the stage of glory to stand shoulder to shoulder with the world's powers - this hinges in great part on your dedication to learning".

1.2. Ethical Standards Required of Teachers

In emphasizing the esteemed role of the teaching profession, President **Ho Chi Minh** clearly outlined the fundamental ethical standards that educators must uphold:

1.2.1. Political Conviction

Teachers are expected to possess robust political conviction grounded in **Marxism - Leninism**, which Ho Chi Minh affirmed as: "There may be many doctrines and numerous -isms today, but the most genuine, the most certain, and the most revolutionary of them is Leninism" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 2, p.289). He maintained that creative application of Marxist - Leninist theory is essential for sustaining political steadfastness and revolutionary ethics, thereby enabling educators to fulfill responsibilities entrusted by the Party, the State, and the people.

1.2.2. Combination of Virtue and Competence

Ho Chi Minh emphasized that teachers must integrate both **moral integrity (virtue)** and **professional competence (talent)**. At A *political training session for educators* in 1959, he warned: "A teacher with talent but lacking virtue is flawed; one with virtue but no talent cannot teach. Virtue must precede talent. To instill virtue in students, teachers themselves must be virtuous". This principle reflects the inseparable relationship between ethical character and pedagogical expertise in effective teaching.

1.2.3. Dedication and Passion for the Profession

Ho Chi Minh likened teaching to skilled craftsmanship: "If one wishes to train blacksmiths or metalworkers, the trainer must master blacksmithing or metalwork". He further affirmed that the teacher's mission is "weighty and glorious" - to nurture citizens, workers, soldiers, and patriotic leaders for the nation (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 4, p. 46).

1.2.4. Continuous Innovation and Self-Improvement

Educators are called to regularly renew their pedagogical methods and expand their professional knowledge: "Teachers must keep pace with the times to fulfill their duties. Complacency, pride, and self - satisfaction lead to stagnation" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 12, p. 489). This reflects his strong advocacy for lifelong learning and innovation in teaching.

1.2.5. Genuine Solidarity

Ho Chi Minh advocated for deep and sincere unity within educational communities - among teachers, between teachers and students, and between schools and society: "Solidarity must be genuinely one - hundred - percent - not superficial or nominal" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 14, p. 402).

1.2.6. Respect for the People and Care for Students

Teachers should respect and learn from the people, especially the working masses, and foster genuine care for their students. Ho Chi Minh asserted: "What benefits the people, do wholeheartedly; what harms the people, avoid at all costs". Educators are reminded that all societal achievements ultimately rest on the contributions of the people, and thus should honor and nurture their students - children of the masses.

1.2. The ideological significance of Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy on the teaching profession for the development of Vietnam's current educator workforce

Under the great victory of the Russian October Revolution in 1917, V.I. Lenin affirmed that "without knowledge, there can be no socialism". The task of cultivating such knowledge can be fulfilled - indeed, can only succeed - with the immense contribution of teachers: "Without teachers, there would be no education". Today, the timeless concept that "*talent with virtue is the vital essence of the nation*" ("*Hiền tài là nguyên khí quốc gia*"), as articulated by the scholar Than Nhan Trung. In our culture, which holds education in the highest regard, the educator's role is honoured - often placed second only to rulership within the traditional "ruler - teacher - parent" hierarchy - and celebrated figures of teacher - leaders such as Chu Van An continue to be revered by later generations.

This cultural tradition of loving and respecting teachers, combined with President Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy, has strongly shaped the role and significance of educators - especially in our current era of national advancement. Today, teachers must meet both moral standards and the demands of a modern society. Based on Ho Chi Minh's belief that the most important qualities for educators in the new society are firm political integrity and high professional competence, our Party and State have prioritized enhancing the political quality and ethical standards of the teaching workforce. *The 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam* declared that strengthening the quality of both the teaching corps and educational administrators is the decisive cornerstone for achieving comprehensive educational development. The Party stressed the need to "focus on training and retraining teachers to meet the requirements of fundamental and thorough education reform" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, Vol. 1, p. 138). This approach is also consistent with *Article 4 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in Education*, which asserts teachers' right to non - discriminatory training and professional freedom in choosing teaching methods.

Today, more than fifty years since the liberation of the South and the reunification of Vietnam (1975-2025), our nation's education system has achieved notable progress. Nearly 1.5 million individuals now work as teachers and educational administrators across the country, about 10 percent of whom hold managerial positions. The distribution of these administrative roles is approximately 18 percent in early childhood education, 65 percent in general, secondary, and continuing education, 6 percent in tertiary institutions, and 11 percent within educational authorities at various levels. In upholding President Ho Chi Minh's perspective on the vital role of educators, one element that distinguishes the Vietnamese teaching profession from those in many other countries is our emphasis on political conviction as part of teacher professional standards. While nations such as Australia and Singapore also endorse high professional quality - highlighting subject-matter expertise and pedagogy - Vietnam deliberately shapes its teaching image to reflect both the spirit of the age and

the unique values of its educational policies. These foundations help explain why Vietnam's achievements in general education have gained international recognition. As *The Economist* notes, "Vietnamese children go through one of the best schooling systems in the world", with outstanding results in PISA and other international examinations. In fact, Vietnamese students outperform not only peers in countries such as Malaysia and Thailand but also those in wealthier nations like the United Kingdom and Canada, which exhibit per - capita incomes more than six times higher. Despite these achievements, we continue to encounter significant challenges in teaching. Teachers frequently endure intense social pressure owing to stringent professional standards and the high sense of responsibility they must uphold; regrettably, a few incidents of educators violating the ethical norms of the profession - some involving unprofessional conduct - have also been reported. However, we view these issues not as insurmountable problems, but as valuable lessons that enable us to learn, grow, and reach even greater accomplishments that align with the demands of the new era - ultimately helping to build a prosperous Vietnam capable of standing proudly alongside world powers. To realise such a vision, our efforts must begin with education: supported by distinguished teachers and national talents committed to serving the country. In alignment with this, the dedicated study and creative application of Ho Chi Minh's educational thought - which emphasises the role of teachers in nurturing human resources - emerges as a fundamental methodological principle that strategically guides the current enhancement of Vietnam's training quality.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Cuban revolutionary leader **Fidel Castro Ruz**, a stalwart champion of the Cuban people, once affirmed: "*The life of Comrade Ho Chi Minh is a shining example of the highest revolutionary and humanitarian qualities*" (Fidel Castro cited in *The world praises and mourns Ho Chi Minh*, 1976, pp. 75 - 76). In the current context of socialist construction, President Ho Chi Minh's admonition remains deeply resonant: "*Defeating imperialism and feudalism is relatively easy; defeating poverty and backwardness is much more difficult*" (Ho Chi Minh, 1961, vol. 10, p. 4). Accordingly, our Party emphasizes that achieving socialism requires not only harnessing the forces of science and technology but, more fundamentally, "**renewing human creative capacity**" - with human beings as subjects of labor and architects of national development under socialism. A central task is **educational reform** centered on cultivating a teaching force who are firmly grounded in professional competence and ethical standards. Although the beloved founding father has departed, his departure has come to symbolize new life. His enduring moral and educational legacy continues to serve as a luminous exemplar for younger generations to emulate - and his ideals on the teaching profession remain an immortal lesson to be deeply internalized.

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