

Short communication

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATING POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS FOR STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN VIETNAM IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

Abstract

Political consciousness education, in general, and the education of political consciousness for vocational college students, in particular, play a crucial role in equipping students with a scientific worldview and methodology, building a revolutionary outlook on life and ideals, and reinforcing students' trust in the Party's leadership in the country's renewal process. This article discusses the importance of educating political consciousness for vocational college students in our country during the current period.

Keywords: Political consciousness; Political consciousness education; Students; Role of political consciousness education; Marxism;

1. Introduction

Students of vocational colleges are the generation continuing the revolutionary cause, the main workforce in the industrialization and modernization process, and the builders and developers of Vietnam today. Over time, vocational colleges have trained many students to become skilled workers with good political qualities, ethics, and skills to meet the requirements of the country in the new era. However, there is still a significant portion of students who have shown many limitations and weaknesses, including a lack of political awareness (political consciousness), which directly affects the effectiveness of their training and personal development. Therefore, providing political awareness (consciousness) education for students in vocational colleges is an extremely important, urgent, and meaningful issue so that all of their current and future activities are oriented towards the unity between individual interests and national interests, class interests.

2. Some theoretical issues on political consciousness and political consciousness education

According to the viewpoint of dialectical materialism, *consciousness is the dynamic and creative reflection of the objective world in the human mind, serving as the subjective image of the objective world*. Social consciousness represents the spiritual

aspect of social life, encompassing viewpoints, ideologies, emotions, and moods that arise from and reflect social existence in specific stages of development.

Political consciousness is one of the forms of social consciousness, which emerges in a class-based society and reflects the political life of society, with the core being the relationship between social classes. It is the awareness of one's class position and role in the development of society; the attitudes towards the basic components of the political system (the state, political parties, etc.); the recognition of important political matters (regime, political system, policies, national development strategy, etc.); the attitudes towards the basic classes and strata in society. Depending on the subject of study, the main relationships that manifest political consciousness can be specified and organized in different ways. One can conceive of the political consciousness of students as their understanding of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, the Party's guidelines and policies, and the state's laws and policies. This includes patriotism, pride in national traditions, attitudes towards the renovation cause, interest in politics and political relations, and the understanding of political needs and interests, which become beliefs, emotions, and motivations for their own social activities, with the goal of building our country into a basically modern industrialized nation.

Political consciousness education is an activity aimed at enhancing the awareness of communist theory, consolidating belief in the revolutionary future through scientific foundations, and establishing cognitive tools to address practical life issues. According to Lenin, ML-ITE aims to make the working masses understand the laws of social development, the scientific worldview, the lines and policies of the revolutionary party, and transform them into beliefs, ideals, and moral principles, helping to eliminate the remnants of the old mindset and adopt new progressive, scientific ideas. President Ho Chi Minh said that ML-ITE is the best way to limit and overcome mistakes in practical leadership, especially the diseases of impatience, subjectivity, and voluntarism. He pointed out that the root cause of subjectivism is lack of theory, or contempt for theory, or just empty theory. According to Ho Chi Minh, studying Marxism-Leninism is *"learning the stance, viewpoints, and methods of Marxism-Leninism to apply these stances and viewpoints to effectively solve the practical problems in our revolutionary work"*¹

3. Role of Political Awareness Education for College Students in Vietnam in the Current Context

Vocational college students - a part of the Vietnamese youth generation are young people who were born and grew up during the country's reform period. In the past, this group only included students from professional secondary schools and vocational schools under the management of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs. Since the Ministry of Education and Training decided to transform the training model of professional colleges into vocational training under the management of the Ministry of

¹Ho Chi Minh, *Complete works*, volume 8, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1996, p.497

Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, the number of vocational college students has now become a significant portion of the future workforce. This group of students generally have a lower starting point compared to university students in terms of expertise, skills, and awareness. Currently, most vocational college students have better learning conditions, science and technology, material and spiritual life, health and physique than the previous generation. The majority of vocational college students firmly maintain their revolutionary morality, live a clean, simple, and healthy life, and strive towards the values of truth, goodness, and beauty. They have a strong love for their country, increased social activeness, volunteer spirit, and readiness to act for the benefit of the nation. They live with a sense of purpose, are caring and helpful towards others, and the spirit of mutual affection has been awakened, becoming a dominant trend that attracts and engages the youth. Notably, “In our society, a distinguished group of young people is continuing to form - firm in politics, outstanding in their professional fields, inheriting the national cultural identity, representing the youth generation in the new era”². This demonstrates that our students today are still clearly aware of their responsibilities to the Fatherland and the people, aspiring to contribute to the cause of national construction and development.

However, in the face of the negative impacts of the market economy and the challenges of international integration; the global, regional and domestic context has seen complex and unpredictable changes, coupled with the 4.0 revolution, students in vocational colleges still have certain limitations such as low professional qualifications, scientific and technological levels, and foreign language proficiency. A portion of students lack ambitious goals, willpower, and have reduced confidence, and are indifferent to socio-political activities. Despite the sabotage of hostile forces, there are still many students who are vague about the nature, schemes, and tactics of the enemy, making them easily incited and manipulated. Some students have a pragmatic, selfish lifestyle, preferring to indulge, be lazy, and avoid difficulties, idolizing foreign things, and prioritizing material interests over national cultural values. The situation of law violations and social evils among the youth is becoming more complex and tends to increase. The independence, proactivity, creativity, and practical skills of young people and students after training are still weak, and do not meet the requirements of industrialization and modernization of the country. Therefore, strengthening education on political and ideological qualities, ethics, lifestyle, and especially political awareness for vocational college students plays a crucial role in the current period. This role is demonstrated in the following aspects:

First, political awareness education contributes to the comprehensive development of individuals.

President Ho Chi Minh clearly stated: “To build socialism, we need to have

²Pham Hong Tung (2011), *Youth and the Lifestyle of Vietnamese Youth in the Process of Renewal and International Integration*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.

socialist people.”³ These are people with political qualities, revolutionary morality, excellent professional expertise and skills, creative ability, and the constant acquisition of new knowledge, as well as the ability to effectively apply their knowledge in all activities... These qualities are primarily developed through formal education and self-education, honed through practical experience. Ho Chi Minh affirmed: “In education and learning, we must focus on all aspects: revolutionary morality, socialist enlightenment, culture, technology, labor, and production.”⁴ Fostering political awareness in students is one of the important contents in comprehensive education, contributing to the development of well-rounded individuals. In addition to professional knowledge and vocational skills, each young person also needs to cultivate their thoughts, ethics, lifestyle, as well as nurturing their patriotism and concern for the community... This helps them gradually establish and firmly maintain their political stance and character. This is an important task, a prerequisite for us to create a new generation of cadres who are both professionally competent and politically steadfast, with revolutionary morality. This will then propel the country’s development to new heights during the periods of industrialization, modernization, and international integration.

Educating students on political awareness helps to enhance their political character. Political character is a comprehensive set of positive human qualities, manifested in the firmness and steadfastness of one’s political views and stance. It means not being perplexed or wavering in the face of political changes and the complex impacts of social life, as well as the difficulties and challenges one faces. It involves unwavering loyalty to the ideal of national independence linked to socialism. This character is also demonstrated by the courage to think, act, and take responsibility to fulfill the chosen ideals and objectives. Through political awareness education, the political character of students is formed and strengthened, contributing to training a generation of successors who are loyal and outstanding in carrying forward the cause of the Party and the Vietnamese nation.

Educating students on political awareness helps to guide their practical actions in a humane, progressive, revolutionary, scientific, and creative direction. The task of political awareness education makes students imbued with the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, contributing to “transforming the world” and creating enthusiastic young people who take the lead in many fields, with good attitudes, perceptions, and a high level of political consciousness. They have the will to overcome difficulties, to establish themselves and their careers, and to vigorously promote the revolutionary activism tradition of previous generations of revolutionary youth. They contribute actively to maintaining social order and security, and enrich themselves and society through various movements and revolutionary actions.

³Ho Chi Minh (2000), *Complete works*, volume 8, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.

⁴Ho Chi Minh (1995), *Complete works*, volume 9, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.

Second, political awareness education for students contributes to training a young workforce to continue the revolutionary cause of the Communist Party.

Students possess precious qualities such as being young, healthy, dynamic, daring to think and act in new ways, etc. They represent the strength of the nation. However, in modern society, for these potentials to become a reality and a driving force in the country's construction and development, they need to be properly guided, based on being equipped with comprehensive knowledge, including a full and profound understanding of proletarian ideology, and especially establishing belief and loyalty to the ideals of the Communist Party.

Political awareness education helps strengthen students' trust in the leadership of the Party, the socialist regime, and the increasingly positive reality of the country's renewal process. When they have firm confidence, it will determine their orientation, purpose, and effectiveness of their activities, leading them to work enthusiastically and actively in their studies, making practical contributions to the country and society.

Educating students about life ideals means educating them about revolutionary ideals, the ideals of the Party, instilling patriotism, love for socialism, and the spirit of national solidarity. Correct and noble ideals will help students have the right attitude and stance in life, work, study, and engage in positive activities; striving for high values such as compassion, altruism, and the qualities of truth, goodness, and beauty; helping them fight against evil, bad, negative, and backward aspects of society and be ready to sacrifice their interests (including their own lives) for these noble ideals.

In addition to strengthening young people's belief in the Party and the revolutionary ideals, their patriotism must be enhanced as well. Patriotism means loving the country's independence and socialism; it means striving to enrich one's family and the nation; it means being loyal to the Party and devoted to the people, not easily falling into the traps of enemies or temptations in life. It can be said that cultivating patriotism awakens important inner strengths to instill in young people - the future masters of the country - the will to be self-reliant and passionate in their studies and work.

Third, political awareness education actively contributes to the struggle in the field of ideology and culture.

Educating students on political awareness means instilling in them revolutionary morals, ideals, lifestyles, and beliefs. This helps to create individuals who have a deep, unwavering loyalty to the Party and solid ideological footing to withstand any challenges. This in turn equips students with the courage and capability to defend the proletarian ideology, safeguard the Communist Party and the socialist system, and protect the traditional cultural values of the nation. It also builds their resistance against the increasingly insidious and sophisticated "peaceful evolution" plots of hostile foreign forces.

The global and regional situation is undergoing complex and unpredictable changes, posing significant risks and challenges to the task of cultivating political

awareness among students. Hostile forces are intensifying their “peaceful evolution” schemes, frequently using the slogans of “religion,” “democracy,” “human rights,” etc. to interfere in the internal affairs of our country. They employ various conspiracies and tactics to undermine us across the political, social, ideological, and psychological spheres. Particularly, they target the youth and students, seeking to lure and incite them towards a pragmatic lifestyle, moral decay, and deviation from socialism, political and ideological regression, and estrangement from the Party’s ideals and political orientation. Exploiting cultural exchange and the market economy, the enemy is waging a psychological war through various means and forms, introducing vulgar tastes and lax notions of freedom into our society, aiming to lead to a state of “freedom without governance” and disrupt social stability.. Hostile and reactionary forces take advantage of the openness to infiltrate “anti-values” according to their schemes. Political awareness education helps students recognize the exploitation by these hostile forces to proactively prevent and stop it. At the same time, it fosters a critical attitude and condemnation of social vices, such as the tendency to trample on ethical traditions, human relationships, and the bonds between teachers and students, and friends for the sake of money and personal gain, as well as falling into social evils

In addition, cultivating political awareness also helps students develop a healthy moral character and lifestyle in the current complex conditions. Developing a healthy moral character and lifestyle is not just about propaganda, exhortation, and calling on the youth to do good deeds, not evil, to live with compassion and meaning, to sacrifice individual interests for the common good... The core issue is to equip students with a dialectical materialist worldview and form a communist worldview. From this, students will see the value, meaning, and purpose of life –“nothing is more precious than independence and freedom” - and know to uphold the spirit of struggling to defend the truth, the right, the good, and condemn the evil, the bad, and the negative; they will have a resolute and determined attitude to combat and push back against all negative elements, decadence, and moral and lifestyle degradation in schools and society. Only then can they become useful individuals to society and contribute to the cause of building and defending the country today.

4. Proposing Some Solutions for Political Awareness Education for Students at Vocational Colleges Today

Regarding the extremely important role of political consciousness education for students in vocational colleges at the present stage, the author would like to recommend some solutions to improve the effectiveness of political consciousness education as follows:

Firstly, innovate the content and teaching methods of the Politics and Law subjects. When undertaking content and teaching method innovation, it needs to be carried out in a synchronized manner. Renewing the understanding, content, form, and teaching methods of Marxism-Leninism theory is aimed at overcoming incorrect views, enriching the correct

views, and applying creatively and developing them, not distancing from the principles of Marxism-Leninism. In terms of content, it needs to be connected with practical needs, ensuring scientificity, systematics, and consistency between theory and practice so that the subject has high applicability and attracts learners. In terms of teaching methods, it is necessary to apply active teaching methods oriented towards capability development, promoting the initiative of students; combining in-school learning with practical training and fieldwork to increase students' understanding and practical activities.

Second, improve the qualifications of teachers who teach Political Science and Law. Teachers are one of the key factors determining the quality and effectiveness of teaching Political Science, Law, and political awareness education for students. The teaching staff needs to have strong professional knowledge, effective communication methods that attract learners, good political and ethical qualities, and serve as role models for students to follow. Therefore, teachers must regularly improve their professional skills and update their practical knowledge through training courses, professional development, and field trips to agencies and units to meet the increasing demands of the education sector.

Third, investment in equipment and teaching facilities. To improve the quality of teaching and learning, schools need to create all the necessary physical and material conditions to meet the learning and training needs of students. Classrooms should have full audio-visual equipment to better serve the teaching work of teachers; the library should have a diverse and rich collection of materials to provide favorable conditions for students to search for and refer to materials to enhance their knowledge.

Fourth, raise the awareness of self-education and self-cultivation of students. Students are the subjects of the cognitive process, and they will internalize the values in the educational content, turning it into guiding principles that govern their own thoughts and actions in accordance with the requirements of reality. Self-education, or in other words, turning "the educational process into a self-educational process" is an important and decisive step in the effectiveness of the educational process in general, and vocational and technical education in particular. Vocational and technical awareness does not come naturally, it must go through the process of education and self-education of students. Students must realize that the process of self-education and self-cultivation is an ongoing daily and lifelong task. Therefore, to enhance vocational and technical awareness, each student needs to establish a learning lifestyle, develop habits and discipline in their study schedule; maintain and strictly implement daily self-study hours to supplement the knowledge they have acquired in class, read more materials, and conduct in-depth research on the topics they have learned. On that basis, students will form a strong political character and noble life ideals for themselves.

Fifth, enhance the role of the Party and political organizations in universities. The Party organization in the school plays a very important role in educating students on vocational and technical awareness. Therefore, in educating students on vocational and technical awareness, it is necessary to organize and perfect the system of political

organizations and associations to take charge of the ideological work in the school. The Office of Political Affairs & Student Management, the Youth Union, the Student Union of the schools, under the leadership of the Party Committee, when organizing movement activities, need to have specific plans, clear objectives and scientific working methods that are suitable for practical needs. Only then can they do a good job of educating students on vocational and technical awareness in vocational schools at the present stage.

5. Conclusion

Students of vocational colleges are one of the key and numerous forces that make significant contributions to the construction and development of socialist Vietnam. Educating, cultivating, and training their political awareness is related to the vital issue of the nation, to the success or failure of the revolution, and to the orientation of socialism. Therefore, educating the political awareness of vocational college students is imperative and necessary - it is both an objective and a driving force to improve the quality of education and training at current vocational colleges.

REFERENCES

1. Le Huu Ai – Lam Ba Hoa (2010), “Some Solutions for Political Awareness Education for Youth and Students in the Current Period,” *The Work of Ideology and Theory in the New Era: Current Situation, Perspectives, and Solutions*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi
2. Ho Chi Minh (1996), *Complete works*, volume 8, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.
3. Ho Chi Minh (1995), *Complete works*, volume 9, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.
4. Pham Dinh Khue (2016), *Political Awareness of Students in Our Country Today – Current Situation and Issues*. Doctoral Dissertation in Philosophy, Academy of Social Sciences.
5. *Education Law* (2005), National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.
6. Pham Hong Tung (2011), *Youth and the Lifestyle of Vietnamese Youth in the Process of Renewal and International Integration*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.
7. Government Proposal on “Strengthening the Education of Revolutionary Ideals, Ethics, and Lifestyle for Youth, Adolescents, and Children in the Period 2015-2020.”