

The Teaching of Political Subjects at Universities in Vietnam in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic has had impacted powerfully on the field of education and training. Education of Political Theory at universities in Vietnam today is one of significant tasks in ideological work of higher educational institutions. Moreover, it has a fundamental role in contributing to the formation of the scientific worldview, human life, and dialectical methodology for students. The article analyzed and clarified some considerable problems in the teaching of Political Subjects process to adapt to the COVID-19 in the current period.

Keywords: Education and training; The COVID-19, Vietnam

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been fiercely sweeping across the world and causing unprecedented negative impacts on all aspects of the economic and social life of many countries around the world, including Vietnam. For the Education and Training aspect, the COVID-19 has brought many difficulties and damages to the work of teaching, learning, and education management. In addition to the quality of training can be influenced and the arising of problems due to students' staying home for a long time, the loss of education spending during the crisis, as well as additional costs and future deterioration of financial resources to education are also key points to be noticed. They will lead to global inequality in access to education and disrupt progress towards goals of sustainable development. In that context, it requires us to have solutions to limit risks of the pandemic and meanwhile ensure the appropriate teaching and learning adapting to the face of complicated development of the COVID-19.

Research Methods

Theoretical basis

Based on the theoretical basis of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, guidelines and policies of the Party and State on teaching, researching and studying political theory subjects, social economic development.

Practical basis

The process of leadership, direction and implementation of the Party, State, and localities (higher education institutions) in the research, teaching and learning of political theory subjects.

Methods

The article uses dialectical materialism and historical materialism in research and specific methods include: analysis, synthesis, logic and history.

Techniques

The article using the technique of document analysis are the system of related documents, research, teaching and learning political theory subjects in particular and Vietnam's socio-economic development in general.

Results and Discussion

Considerable problems in the teaching Political Subjects process to adapt to the COVID-19

With the mission of equipping learners with the worldview, human life, and scientific methodology, building civic consciousness, mastery capacity in economic, political, socio-cultural activities, etc., Political Subjects have an important role in the training program of universities. However, the implementation of that mission is facing many difficulties and challenges because of the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the face of the COVID-19's impacts, changing manners, content and methods of teaching Political Subjects in particular is an essential need and reflect truly the change of practice. Furthermore, with complicated development of the COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching Political Subjects needs to determine some common points of view to be able to adapt to complication of the COVID-19, specifically as follow:

The first thing is applying Information Technology (IT) to improve the quality of training

and promoting the building of learning society and lifelong learning.

The second thing is promoting the positivity, dynamite, and creativity of teacher and learner subjects.

Associating with the two views mentioned above, we will see that there are two issues need to consider in the process of teaching Political Subjects to adapt to the COVID-19, specifically:

Firstly, implementing the application of E-learning in teaching and learning activities will be an important factor contributing to improving the quality of teaching and learning Political Subjects in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the current period, the form of applying IT for teaching and learning that is quite popular is the way of “computer-based learning,” called E-learning. E-learning is a form of learners using computers to self-study lectures teachers have prepared, watching videos of the teachers’ sessions, or exchanging online with teachers via the Internet. A primary difference of the E-learning form is learner-centered, learners will control their own learning process and teachers only play the role of supporting learning for learners.

E-learning (Electronic Learning) is a term used to describe learning and training based on information technology and media, especially is information technology. In the context when technology is becoming more and more popular as today, the way of learning Political Subjects in the form of E-Learning will contribute to meet new education’s criteria, such as learning anywhere, learning anytime, learning by hobby, and lifelong learning. From a somehow perspective, E-Learning will complement the traditional way of learning and contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning Political Subjects under the impacts of the COVID-19. In the practice of researching and applying, we find that teaching and learning Political Subjects by E-Learning includes some primary forms, such as:

- Distance Learning: The term mentions the form of training in which teachers and learners are not in the same place or even at the same point in time. For instance, training using technology through Scalable Video Coding or Web technology;

- CBT (Computer-Based Training): In a broad sense, the term refers to any form of training using computers. However, it is usually understood in a narrow sense to mention applications (software) that train on CD-ROMs or install on standalone computers, are not connected to the network, and not communicating with the outside world. This term is identical with the phrase of CD-ROM Based Training;

- WBT (Web-Based Training) is a form of training that uses Web technology. The learning content, information of courses management, learners’ information are stored on the server, and users can access it easily through the Web browser. Learners can communicate with each other and teachers, using functions of direct exchange, forums, e-mail, etc., and even can hear the voice and see the image of the person communicating with us;

- Online Learning/ Training is a form of training that uses Internet connection to learn: getting learning materials, communicating between learners and teachers, etc.

- TBT (Technology-Based Training) is a form of training applying technology, especially based on technology.

Thus, broad applications of E-Learning in teaching and learning Political Subjects in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, in general include “dominant features” as follow:

(i) Making maximum advantages for learners and helping them not be limited in terms of time and places;

(ii) Online education is more economical than courses at universities requiring learners to attend every day. It is because transportation costs, infrastructure, and college costs are completely eliminated. Besides, the best lecturers whom universities cannot afford to use full of their time, can be hired for a limited number of classroom hours, as opposed to online education;

(iii) E-learning courses permit learners being completely free to study anytime and everywhere. Freedom will allow you to arrange and manage your own time;

(iv) While studying at a university the whole time, students almost do not have time for anything else. However, if learners take an online course, they can have all day at their disposal, work on their assignments, research topics they are

interested in at night or any other time. This is one of the best advantages of online education. It is a great way to learn for learners who have no choice but will interrogate and find out;

(v) The process of taking part in online courses will help learners gain competence in the use of computers, the Internet, as well as a variety of other related software;

(vi) The connection of electronic information channels, electronic libraries, and the Internet into designing lectures for Political Subjects will contribute to improving the quality of lectures, creating excitement for learners, and making the teaching and learning process more effective. While implementing social distance due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the application of E-Learning is one of the most modern, advanced, and productive tools to help learners and lecturers find, handle, disseminate and absorb information quickly and effectively.

However, besides the advantages mentioned and analyzed above, the use of E-Learning into teaching and learning Political Subjects in the context of the COVID-19 remain some limitations, specifically as follow:

- E-learning is not suitable for older learners who are not proficient in computers. During the learning process, learners will not have many chances to learn and exchange information with classmates.
- The learning environment does not stimulate the initiative, creativity, exchanging actively, debating ideas, etc., of learners as traditional classes. It does not mention the “cooling down” and “turning off the fire” in some lecturers when there is no direct interaction with listeners or learners in the teaching process.
- Making the costs of education increase. The process of participating in the study forces learners to be relatively fully equipped with devices such as computers, speakers, headsets with microphones, printers, smartphones, etc.
- Incurring more costs to build and redesign the program.
- Political Subjects are science with highly abstract generalization and a system of abstract concepts and categories. Thus, with online methods, lecturers cannot grasp the psychology of learners, which leads to skepticism of students’ ability to absorb.

- The Online teaching method can only be applied for classes with a small number of students. Moreover, compared to a traditional teaching method, group presentations cannot be held in online classes because of not controlling the number of students.

- In terms of technology, if the Internet connection is unstable or has errors, sessions can be interrupted.

Secondly, the author states that in any space, time, environment, conditions, or circumstances, especially in the context of the COVID-19, the most essential premise to contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning Political Subjects is human problems.

For lecturers:

Lecturers should provide a detailed outline for students before starting to teach a topic or any subjects. The outline will include parts teachers will teach online, parts for reading books, self-study sections, and sections that require students to learn at home. In chapters or parts requiring learners to study at home, lecturers should give clear targets of the chapters or sections. Also, teachers should raise questions requiring students to answer after learning the chapters or sections. Besides, teachers need to guide their students on how to set a study plan. It will help students have a plan dividing their time of each week, each day based on the study plan of a term, a school year to manage their time, not forget tasks to do, and not be passive before many documents need to be read. Lecturers should also grasp for learners the spirit of self-reliance thoroughly at the beginning. This is a necessary psychological therapy to boost students’ morale in the progress of online learning that helps learners have a more positive attitude and be more active in self-study before the context of the COVID-19 remains complicated. Besides, lecturers also need to spend time giving students instructions on how to listening to lessons, how to take notes when learning online, how to learn, how to study documents, as well as reading skills - one of the skills a student needs to have. It can be determined that this is one of the problems that any students entangled with basic mistakes, thus affecting students’ study results in the learning process. The author also supposes that guiding students on finding sources of books or documents is the first important step when reading books.

Lecturers give requirements of topics and contents to for students looking for suitable books or documents to read. Based on the content, features of books and the reading's goal, teachers need to guide students on selecting a reasonable way of reading. However, when reading books the first important thing is understanding and mastering the content read. Next, thinking about things read, taking notes on what needs to be remembered, and finding new things in the book. Making a plan, preparing for the classroom environment, teaching and professional responsibilities and more importantly, creating an atmosphere of dialogue between learners and teachers are also points to be concerned and focused on in the interacting process with learners on digital platforms or in traditional ways.

For students:

Reality showed us that in the process of teaching Political Subjects, the amount of teaching time in classes is so short while the content of knowledge that needs to be transmitted is too much. Therefore, an issue raised is that learners have to study by themselves and prepare for new lessons before going to classes is a vital thing.

Based on the nature of teaching, self-study of students includes the whole of the learning environment held by teachers with a goal aiming at self-training for learners. Self-learning is an activity continuing without the direct participation of teachers. The time of self-study at home is very significant because this is when learners having lots of time to reflect, deepen the problems, continue to propose questions for teachers to answer, or try to apply them in practice. It is also a way for knowledge to be engraved in the brain, be hard to forget, and become useful. Self-learning also means having careful preparation in advance following the requirements of each lecture. On the other hand, in the process of learning or working, students should push themselves into a situation of no return, the more difficult tasks are, the more efforts students have to spend. The more efforts students spend, the faster they progress. The habit of independent thinking and working will make people learning and working scientifically more confident when facing difficulties. The difficulties will lead to a high concentration of thoughts. In general, developing independent thinking, critical thinking, putting yourselves in difficult tasks, and

cutting the way back are ways we could prepare for facing difficulties. In addition, learners who know how to learn brilliantly and actively mean having had good baggage to prepare for becoming good creative workers in the future. Self-study means consolidating, improving knowledge, and broadening acknowledgments. Self-study also means that students have to be independent, make their own study plan and methods, actively explore and analyze documents, books to master knowledge and skills. If lacking patient, endure, and serious, students will never complete the study plan they made.

It can be determined that in the current globalization context when the world is becoming "flatter," information and knowledge are moving and changing dizzily every second, self-learning and self-study have a great significance for students, as well as the quality and effectiveness of the teaching-training process in school. The author supposes that the role of self-study is synthesized with the following key points:

- Self-study is a fundamental method to perceive knowledge;
- Self-study helps people be able to be active learning all life;
- Self-study plays a significant role in educating, forming personalities for students.

Other problems related to the process of teaching Political Subjects to adapt to the COVID-19

- It is necessary to realize that the application of Information Technology to improve the training quality, promote building learning society, and lifelong learning is a trend of education in the world, including Vietnam, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as today.

- Educational institutions need to move from passive to active positions and take account of longer-termed scenarios in the direction of restructuring the teaching staff adapting to online teaching.

- The COVID-19 is also an opportunity for educational institutions to make drastic digital transformations. Education institutions need to jointly develop e-learning and learning materials, exchange practical experiences, and strengthen international collaboration in the online training field. Moreover, when having an open repository of materials, no matter where, at any time, under

current social isolation or not, learning cannot be “isolated” or limited with the development trends of the world.

- Major mobile network operators in Vietnam, including Viettel, VNPT, MobiFone, and Vietnamobile need to have commitments of assisting Education in preventing and controlling the COVID-19 by providing free mobile data for students, teachers, and parents when using online training methods Ministry of Education and Training claimed.

- Higher education institutions should also need strategies in developing e-learning and learning materials, exchanging practical experiences, strengthening international cooperation in the field of online training. Opened resources will be distributed on the information network and help all objects access knowledge.

- Authorities need to permit and facilitate mass teaching via television and online. Educational institutions that conduct online training also reduce tuition fees or provide scholarships for students with difficult circumstances.

Primary solutions to improve the quality and the effectiveness in the progress of teaching Political Subjects to adapt to the COVID-19

Firstly, it is necessary to improve the perception of position and role of Information Technology in modern teaching, thereby improving IT qualifications and skills that are corresponding for the teaching staff. Paying attention to building a teaching staff is the most important requirement in improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training in general, as well as teaching Political Subjects in particular.

Secondly, it is significant to invest in construction of technical facilities and a system of IT equipment that are modern and synchronous to meet the needs of Political Subjects teaching in the context of the COVID-19. An up-to-date, appropriate, and synchronous system of technical equipment must be available to help lecturers and students to be active and positive in researching and studying, specifically such as lecture halls, dedicated classrooms with PCs, projectors, internal Internet, etc. (for students’ teaching, discussions, and group work); a system of reading rooms in the library, network accessing room (for self-study, searching and exploiting relevant information); websites and the school’s IT

database management system (for providing official information related to activities of the school, departments on timetables, teaching plans, documents in the e-library), etc. All of them must be built, managed and exploited synchronously and efficiently.

Finally, there must be regulations and sanctions related to university training of Political Subjects which are suitable with the online training of these subjects. The rules include the minimum time of attending classes, assessment of subjects, managing students, etc. Furthermore, the training management unit also needs to reform the methods of organizing exams, tests and appraisals. It is possible to combine or choose flexibly depending on conditions one of the following forms: centralized exams, online exams, etc. However, despite any form being chosen, it is necessary to ensure objectivity and accuracy in assessing learners.

Conclusion

The difficult period with the effects of the COVID-19 is an opportunity for drastic digital transformations in teaching Political Subjects at universities in Vietnam. Within a definite scope and content related to the innovation of teaching methods, it is an urgent problem, one of the central goals in education reform in Vietnam today. Promoting the role of IT support in teaching and learning Political Subjects is a long, difficult and complicated task that is the general responsibility of everyone and relevant forces in the education system. However, first of all, it requires great efforts of the teaching staff and facilities, continues to perfect and modernize teaching equipment and technology, especially the improvement of IT infrastructure to be able to exploit in the fullest and best way. The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning Political Subjects in the face of the impacts and complicated developments of the COVID-19 today needs to set the goal of turning challenges into opportunities, moving from the initial passive to the dominant position and taking into consideration longer-termed scenarios for future developments.

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