

THE VALUE OF THE MASS LITERACY DECREE AND REQUIREMENTS FOR ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF POLITICAL THEORY EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract: This article analyzes the historical and ideological significance of the 1945 Mass Literacy Decree (Bình dân học vụ) in establishing the principle of universal access to knowledge and improving public intellectual standards. On this foundation, the study examines the transition from literacy universalization to the development of digital competencies within the context of national digital transformation, while highlighting current requirements for improving the quality of political theory education. The findings suggest that the spirit of the Mass Literacy Movement retains important methodological value, providing orientation for innovation in political theory education and for developing political awareness, competence, and resilience in the digital era.

Keywords: Mass Literacy Movement; political theory education; digital transformation; knowledge universalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of contemporary social development, knowledge increasingly plays a central role in the developmental capacity structure of nations and serves as a foundational factor governing the operational effectiveness of political and socio-economic institutions. From a social science perspective, knowledge is not merely understood as a system of information but as a form of social capacity associated with the ability of subjects to access, process, and transform information under specific historical and technological conditions.

In the modern history of Vietnam, the 1945 Mass Literacy Decree initiated by President Ho Chi Minh marked an important transformation in the perception of organizing social knowledge life. This policy document not only focused on eliminating illiteracy but also reflected a vision of expanding access to knowledge for the entire population, thereby linking knowledge with citizens' capacity to participate in political and social life.

Entering the era of national digital transformation, knowledge structures have undergone profound changes as knowledge becomes digitized, decentralized, and operated within digital platform environments. This transformation has fundamentally altered modes of knowledge access, thereby requiring not only the universalization of knowledge content but, more importantly, the universalization of capacities to access, exploit, and apply knowledge in digital environments.

In current practice of political theory education, the demand for innovation has become increasingly evident as traditional teaching methods reveal certain limitations in transforming theoretical knowledge into learners' cognitive capacity and political awareness. This requires an adjustment in approach toward linking theoretical knowledge with the operational context of the digital society.

On this basis, the article focuses on analyzing the historical and ideological value of the 1945 Mass Literacy Decree and clarifying the requirements for improving the quality of political theory education in the context of national digital transformation today.

2. RESEARCH CONTENT

2.1. Context of Issuance and Fundamental Content of the Mass Literacy Decree

The Mass Literacy Decree was promulgated on September 8, 1945, shortly after the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. At that time, the revolutionary government entered a period of state-building and consolidation under conditions in which the country faced simultaneous political, economic, and social challenges.

Illiteracy was widespread in society, with more than 90% of the population unable to read and write. This was a direct consequence of colonial education policies, in which the education system was deliberately limited and did not aim to provide universal access to knowledge for the majority of the population, serving primarily the colonial administrative apparatus and a small segment of administrative personnel.

This situation had a direct impact on the capacity of the revolutionary government in organizing and operating state functions. The implementation of policies and directives encountered significant difficulties due to the limited ability of the population to access and comprehend information. At the same time, the development of the new administrative system was constrained by the low general level of public education.

The task of eliminating illiteracy was therefore identified as an urgent requirement in the early stage of state-building. Improving public literacy was directly linked to strengthening the political system and ensuring the effectiveness of state governance. President Ho Chi Minh's view that "an illiterate nation is a weak nation" clearly reflects this awareness.

On September 8, 1945, President Ho Chi Minh signed and issued three decrees related to the Mass Literacy Movement, including Decree No. 17/SL, Decree No. 19/SL, and Decree No. 20/SL. These decrees provided the legal foundation for organizing a nationwide literacy eradication campaign.

Decree No. 17/SL established the National Literacy Agency (Nha Binh dân học vụ) under the Ministry of National Education, responsible for directing and organizing literacy eradication activities from the central to local levels. Decree No. 19/SL assigned responsibilities for implementation at local levels and mobilized social forces to participate in teaching and learning activities. Decree No. 20/SL stipulated the universalization of the Vietnamese national script (Quốc ngữ) on a compulsory and tuition-free basis.

The issuance and implementation of this system of decrees created the institutional foundation for the widespread development of the Mass Literacy Movement, contributing gradually to the improvement of public literacy and serving the requirements of building and consolidating the revolutionary government in the early post-independence period.

2.2. The Value of the Mass Literacy Decree in Access to Knowledge

2.2.1. Expanding the Population's Access to Knowledge under the Establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

The expansion of the population's access to knowledge was identified as an inevitable requirement immediately after the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945. In the context of a newly independent country and a newly established political system, the issue of public literacy became a fundamental factor in organizing and operating society.

Widespread illiteracy, with more than 90% of the population unable to read and write, created a major barrier to accessing information, legal documents, and state policies. This situation directly affected citizens' ability to exercise their rights and obligations, while also reducing the effectiveness of the revolutionary administration during the early stage of state-building.

In this context, the expansion of access to knowledge was defined as a socio-political task closely associated with the consolidation of the new government. Knowledge was gradually universalized through the national language (Quốc ngữ), thereby enabling the population to access information and participate in social life.

The 1945 Mass Literacy Decree established the legal foundation for this process, stipulating the nationwide organization of literacy eradication and the mobilization of social participation. In particular, the provision stating that “learning the national script is compulsory and free of charge for all people”¹ established the principle of universal and equal access to literacy, thereby laying the legal foundation for expanding the population’s access to knowledge.

Accordingly, in the context of the newly established Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the expansion of access to knowledge was implemented through legal institutions and a broad social movement, contributing gradually to the improvement of public literacy and the consolidation of the political and social foundations of the revolutionary government.

2.2.2. Enhancing Public Literacy and Citizens’ Participation in Socio-Political Life

Enhancing public literacy through the Mass Literacy Movement was identified as a fundamental condition for enabling substantive participation of the population in socio-political life during the early stage of state-building in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In a context where the majority of the population was illiterate, access to information and understanding of state activities remained highly limited, resulting in a weak linkage between state institutions and social life.

The universalization of the national script (Quốc ngữ) fundamentally transformed the population’s capacity to access knowledge. With the ability to read and write, citizens could access revolutionary newspapers, governmental documents, and official information regarding state policies and guidelines. This transformation contributed to the formation of initial political awareness, thereby gradually expanding the population’s participation in social and political activities.

This development was clearly reflected in the historical practice of the 1945–1946 period. The First National Assembly Election held on January 6, 1946, marked an important milestone, demonstrating the people’s direct exercise of suffrage under conditions of improved literacy. This indicates an expansion of popular sovereignty closely associated with the process of knowledge dissemination in the new society.

The drafting of the 1946 Constitution further reflected the increasing level of public participation in political and legal life. As literacy levels improved, access to and understanding of state regulations became more feasible, thereby strengthening ideological coherence and consolidating the operational foundation of the revolutionary government.

It can therefore be affirmed that improving public literacy through the Mass Literacy Movement did not merely affect the field of education, but also created conditions for expanding citizens’ participation in socio-political life, thereby contributing to the consolidation of the political foundation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the early post-independence period.

2.2.3. Organizational Methods for Literacy Eradication and Historical Value in Practical Implementation

The success of the Mass Literacy Movement originated from the establishment of an organizational model that was appropriate to the specific conditions of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the early post–August Revolution period in 1945. In the context of limited educational resources, insufficient infrastructure, and an inadequate number of qualified teachers to meet the requirements of large-scale literacy eradication, the movement was organized on the basis of mobilizing the strength of the entire population.

The movement was implemented according to the principle of socialization of educational activities, in which literate individuals participated in instructing illiterate individuals, thereby forming a widespread grassroots literacy network. The State played a guiding and coordinating role, while mass organizations such as youth, women, farmers, and workers directly participated in implementation. This mechanism ensured the rapid diffusion of the movement throughout society.

The organization of literacy classes demonstrated high flexibility in both spatial and temporal dimensions. Classes were held in communal houses, private homes, production facilities, and military units. Learning schedules were arranged in accordance with labor conditions, primarily in the evenings or during agricultural off-seasons. This organizational approach enabled the movement to adapt to practical conditions, ensuring that learning was closely integrated with the daily life and production activities of the population.

¹ Decree No. 20/SL on Mass Literacy, dated September 8, 1945, issued by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The scale of implementation during the 1945–1946 period clearly reflects the effectiveness of this organizational model. Tens of thousands of classes were established nationwide, attracting millions of participants to learn the national script within a short period. This demonstrates the capacity for extensive social mobilization under conditions in which the country had just gained independence and faced severe material difficulties.

The outcomes of the movement confirm its historical value as a mass-based educational model. It not only contributed to large-scale illiteracy eradication but also established an educational organizational approach suited to Vietnam's early revolutionary state-building context, in which the State played a guiding role while the people served as the central actors in implementation.

2.3. Requirements for Improving the Quality of Political Theory Education in the Context of Digital Transformation

2.3.1. Transformation of Knowledge Formation and Reception in the Digital Space

The 1945 Mass Literacy Decree reflects the strategic thinking of the Communist Party of Vietnam and President Ho Chi Minh regarding the role of knowledge in establishing the political foundation of the revolutionary state. The policy of eradicating illiteracy expanded the population's access to basic knowledge, thereby creating conditions for the formation of citizens' capacity to participate in socio-political life.

In the current context, the digital space has profoundly transformed the modes of knowledge formation and reception in the field of political theory education. Knowledge is now distributed across multiple digital platforms, characterized by rapid dissemination, high interactivity, and a continuously evolving, multi-dimensional learning environment.

Within the digital environment, informational phenomena appear in diverse and non-linear forms, requiring learners to apply dialectical materialist methodology in order to identify their essential nature. The ability to analyze the relationship between appearance and essence, as well as between the particular and the general, is exercised under conditions of fragmented and potentially distorted information flows.

Historical and contextual thinking plays a crucial role in assessing socio-political issues emerging in cyberspace, helping to prevent one-sided or purely emotional interpretations.

The development of the digital economy has also transformed approaches to economic knowledge acquisition. Phenomena such as e-commerce, platform-based economies, digital labor fluctuations, and global supply chains have become integral components of contemporary economic life.

Learners are required to apply fundamental economic laws, including the law of value, supply–demand relations, and relations of production, in order to interpret emerging economic phenomena. Economic analysis must be conducted within the holistic framework of a socialist-oriented market economy.

In the digital space, various models of social development coexist, leading to competition among different ideological perspectives. Learners are required to identify the scientific basis of the socialist path of development, analyzing alternative viewpoints on the foundation of objectives, driving forces, and the nature of socialism.

The process of knowledge acquisition is therefore closely linked to the consolidation of ideological orientation and the formation of a unified understanding of Vietnam's development path.

The ethical values, revolutionary morality, working style, and methodology of Ho Chi Minh continue to play a guiding role in shaping behavior in the digital environment. Learners apply ethical standards such as diligence, thrift, integrity, righteousness, and impartiality in evaluating public service behavior and online conduct.

Knowledge acquisition in this context is associated with the formation of correct political attitudes and social responsibility in practical activities.

Knowledge of the Party's guidelines and policies is received in an environment where official information coexists with diverse and multi-dimensional narratives. Learners apply the Party's policies in analyzing issues such as digital governance, digital economic development, cybersecurity assurance, and emerging social challenges.

Systemic thinking and the ability to connect theory with practice play a decisive role in evaluating and applying Party guidelines to national development realities.

The transformation of knowledge formation and reception in the digital space reflects a profound shift in the operational conditions of knowledge in modern society, moving from centralized and one-way models to multi-source, multi-dimensional, and highly interactive environments. Historically, the 1945 Mass Literacy Decree marked a milestone in establishing the policy of eradicating illiteracy and expanding citizens' access to basic knowledge, thereby laying the foundation for improving public literacy and developing knowledge accessibility in the early stage of revolutionary state-building in Vietnam.

On the basis of this historical value, current requirements emphasize the continued development of theoretical thinking capacity, information processing and analytical skills in the digital environment, while strengthening political resilience grounded in Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought, thereby meeting the requirements of building a contingent of cadres and party members in the new context.

2.3.2. Requirements for Developing Learners' Cognitive Capacity and Political Resilience in the Context of Digitalization

In the context of rapid development of digital space, political theory knowledge is increasingly influenced by multidimensional information flows, including both official and distorted or misleading information systems. This reality places new demands on political theory education, requiring a shift from the mere transmission of knowledge toward the formation of systematic theoretical thinking capacity and firm political resilience among learners.

Marxist–Leninist philosophy plays a foundational role as the worldview and scientific methodology of the entire system of political theory. In the context of digitalization, the requirement for innovation is reflected in the ability to apply dialectical materialism to analyze complex social phenomena, particularly nonlinear informational patterns in cyberspace.

Practical realities indicate that much information in the digital environment is fragmented, decontextualized, and capable of generating distorted perceptions if not analyzed from a comprehensive and historically specific perspective. Therefore, the formation of dialectical thinking enables learners to identify the essential nature of issues, thereby avoiding emotional or one-sided assessments of socio-political phenomena.

Marxist political economy provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the laws governing economic development in relation to politics and society. In the context of digital transformation, phenomena such as platform-based economies, digital labor, e-commerce, and fluctuations in information markets require enhanced analytical capacity regarding new economic relations.

Learners are required to apply fundamental economic laws to explain phenomena such as wealth inequality in the digital environment, changes in labor structures, and the impact of technology on production relations. This serves as a basis for avoiding simplistic or ahistorical interpretations of contemporary economic issues.

Scientific socialism plays a guiding role in defining the goals and development path of society. Under current conditions, the requirement for innovation is reflected in the ability to deeply understand the socialist development model within the context of a socialist-oriented market economy and extensive international integration.

The expansion of digital space has generated diverse perspectives on social development models. Therefore, learners must be capable of identifying and analyzing these perspectives based on the objectives, driving forces, and essential nature of socialism, thereby ensuring consistency in theoretical awareness.

Ho Chi Minh Thought embodies core values of revolutionary ethics, leadership style, and the principle of serving the people. In the context of digitalization, these values must be transformed into behavioral standards within public service and digital environments.

Practical experience shows that issues of public service ethics, online conduct, and information responsibility of cadres and Party members are becoming increasingly prominent. Accordingly, the application of Ho Chi Minh Thought contributes to shaping self-regulating behavioral capacity, maintaining ethical standards, and strengthening social responsibility in digital environments.

The Party's guidelines and policies constitute a system of viewpoints and strategic orientations for national development across different historical stages. In the current context, the requirement for innovation is reflected in the capacity to analyze and apply Party guidelines to address emerging issues in modern governance.

Issues such as digital governance, digital economic development, cybersecurity assurance, and ideological struggle in cyberspace require learners to connect Party policies with implementation practices, thereby forming systematic and practice-oriented political thinking.

The requirement to develop learners' cognitive capacity and political resilience in the context of digitalization is rooted in the historical legacy of the 1945 Mass Literacy Decree, which expanded citizens' access to knowledge. The Mass Literacy Movement marked a historical transformation from widespread illiteracy to the universalization of basic literacy, gradually forming the capacity to access and master information in society, thereby affirming the role of education in enhancing public intellectual standards and strengthening the political and social foundation of the revolutionary state.

On this basis, current requirements emphasize the development of systemic thinking capacity, information analysis and processing skills in a multidimensional digital environment, while strengthening political resilience grounded in Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought. This process ensures the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical application capacity, thereby contributing to the development of a contingent of cadres and Party members meeting the requirements of national development in the new era.

2.3.3. Renovation of Organizational Methods in Political Theory Education in Response to Practical Requirements of Digital Transformation

The renovation of organizational methods in political theory education in the context of digital transformation is based on the inheritance of methodological values derived from the 1945 Mass Literacy Movement. The principles of flexibility, mass accessibility, and close linkage with learners' practical conditions, together with the principle of “learning coupled with practice,” constitute an important foundation for expanding access to knowledge in Vietnam's revolutionary educational history.

Building upon this spirit, the organization of teaching Marxist–Leninist Philosophy, Marxist–Leninist Political Economy, Scientific Socialism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the Party's Line and Guidelines should be adjusted toward strengthening practical relevance and applicability. Teaching content must be designed to ensure the integration of theory and practice, thereby maintaining consistency between theoretical awareness and practical activities.

In teaching Ho Chi Minh Thought, contents related to public service ethics, working style, and the responsibility of cadres and Party members are linked to practical tasks in administrative agencies, thereby forming behavioral standards in public service performance and people-oriented service.

In Marxist–Leninist Political Economy, fundamental economic laws such as the law of value, supply–demand relations, and distribution mechanisms are associated with practical phenomena such as market price fluctuations, labor dynamics, and the impact of the digital economy, thereby enhancing learners' socio-economic analytical capacity.

In the subject of the Party's Line and Guidelines, practical situations such as industrial zone development, new rural development, land clearance, and local economic development are used as case bases to apply holistic and historical–specific perspectives in policy analysis.

Practical teaching activities at political theory training institutions indicate that linking learning content with real-life situations enhances learners' proactiveness while strengthening their ability to analyze and apply theoretical knowledge in practice. This reflects the inevitable requirement of innovating organizational methods in political theory education under digital transformation, while affirming the inherited value of the educational organization model of the Mass Literacy Movement in the contemporary context.

3. CONCLUSION

The 1945 Mass Literacy Decree holds strategic significance in improving public literacy and consolidating the political foundation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the early post-independence period. The movement not only contributed to the eradication of illiteracy but also expanded citizens' access to knowledge and their participation in socio-political life.

In the context of current digital transformation, the historical values of the movement continue to affirm their contemporary relevance, serving as an important foundation for innovating political theory education toward improving quality, practical applicability, and the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practice.

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