

Linking Theory with Practice in Teaching Theoretical Subjects in Universities in Viet Nam Nowadays

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Abstract:- To properly implement the principle of linking theory with practice in teaching theoretical subjects in universities in Viet Nam nowadays plays a significantly important role, contributing to properly carrying out two objectives: make students understand the nature of theory in the teaching process and know how to properly and creatively apply into practical occupational activities to properly perform their assigned tasks and duties according to the training objectives and training.

Keywords:- *Unity between theory and practice in university teaching; teaching theoretical subjects in universities in Viet Nam.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In order to reform and improve quality of teaching in general, and teaching theoretical subjects in particular at universities in Viet Nam nowadays, to link theory with practice is a significantly necessary and highly effective action, creating motivation to promote thinking, independence and creativeness of students. This also helps them apply their acquired knowledge on the practice of occupational activities after graduation. Also, this helps lecturers actively engage in and acquire practical knowledge and appropriately apply such knowledge on their lectures to avoid dogma and rigidity in theoretical teaching.

II. LINKING THEORY WITH PRACTICE IN TEACHING THEORETICAL SUBJECTS IN UNIVERSITIES IN VIET NAM NOWADAYS - THEORETICAL ISSUES AND CURRENT SITUATIONS

According to Marxist - Leninist viewpoint, theory and practice has a dialectical interrelationship. This is one of the essential principles of Marxism - Leninism. In the relationship between theory and practice, practice is the source, motive, objective and criterion of truth. It is in the practical activities and the activities of renovating the world that awareness and theory of human are formed and developed. The knowledge we have so far either directly or indirectly originates from practical activities. F. Engels wrote: "But it is precisely the alteration of nature by men, ... is most essential and immediate basis of human thought, and it is in the measure that man has learned to change nature that his intelligence has increased"¹. Also, theory is only of real implications when it is applied on practice, meets requirements of practice, and is verified as being a

truth or a mistake by practice. C. Marx wrote: "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth - i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice"². Practice plays an important role in forming and developing theory of human being, but theory also has a significant impact on practice. Theory is the guideline for action, leading and directing practice; orients and forecast practical activities, making practical activities be more proactive and active. Theory can predict movements in the future, so as to map out directions for practical activities to gain effectiveness. As such, awareness process of human must originate from practice, be closely linked with practice, place emphases on practice generalization, and theoretical research must be linked with practice, and learning combined with practicing. Practical activities must be guided and lead by theory in order to attain success. Therefore, the unity between theory and practice is one of the fundamental principles of Marxism - Leninism.

Previously, President Ho Chi Minh affirmed that: "Lý luận cốt để áp dụng vào công việc thực tế. Lý luận mà không áp dụng vào công việc thực tế là lý luận suông. Dù xem được hàng ngàn, hàng vạn quyển lý luận, nếu không biết đem ra thực hành, thì khác nào một cái hòm đựng sách"³ (Theory is essentially for being applied on practical works. Theory not being applied on practical works is a doctrinaire. One who may have read thousands of theoretical book but does not know how to apply is not different from a trunk of books). Documents of the 12th National Congress of the Communist Party of Viet Nam has confirmed the guidelines and principles of reforming education and training as follows: "To vigorously shift from an education that focuses on knowledge transfer to fostering full development of skills and qualifications of learners; learning to be combined with practicing; theory to be combined with practice"⁴. Aforesaid guiding viewpoints have set the necessity of linking theory with practice in education and training in Viet Nam in general, and in teaching and learning in universities in Viet Nam in particular.

In the recent years, universities in Viet Nam have been actively reforming training contents and curricula in general and the teaching of theoretical academic subjects in particular in the direction of closely following the practice of socio-economic development, the practice of occupational activities of students after graduation; meeting requirements of educating and training high quality human resources for our country in the new context. However, the

quality and effectiveness of education are still lower than expected, especially higher education and vocational education. The education system lacks continuity between levels and methods of education, and is rather theoretical than practical. The training not well associated with scientific research, manufacture, business, and demand of the labor market⁷⁵. In fact, the teaching and learning processes in a number of universities are still lack of activeness and proactiveness in scientific researching, exploring and creating, and have not actually linked lecture contents with occupational practice of the learners. Lecture contents are still theoretically heavy, in short of linking with practice, and do not have close application of theory on occupational practice of students. Moreover, professional qualifications of a number of lecturers still have limitations and drawbacks, are renovated slowly, and fail to meet requirements of teaching at university level in the context of the Industry 4.0 occurring vigorously.

The main reasons of these aforesaid limitation are that the actors participating in the process of researching, teaching and learning have not been comprehensively aware of the implications, roles and importance of the work of reforming and improving quality and effectiveness of studying, researching, applying and developing theory in the new context. The leadership and instructions of educational institutions have not been thorough, still been overlapping and duplicative, and been slow in reforming contents, curricula and methods of teaching theories to students. The deep root of the aforesaid situations is the drawback and limitation of combining theory with practice, of combining theory learning with implementation in practical activities. In teaching theoretical subjects, there still has been the cases in which teachers and learners do not really emphasizing on closely combining theory with practice, or theory is lectured in a unspecific manner, or the selection and identification of practical issues for associating, proving and explaining theory are not typical and not appropriate with lecture contents and learner, resulting in the fact that the teachers fail to provide their students with theoretical issues and practical experiences. Specifically, a number of students do not update new information and understandings frequently, do not have concerns and creativeness in their learning processes, and only study theory in a passive manner, resulting in them not comprehensively understanding research problems. The situation of theory departing from practice is appearing in lots of students.

III. III. ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS AIMED AT IMPROVING QUALITY OF LINKING THEORY WITH PRACTICE IN TEACHING THEORY SUBJECTS IN UNIVERSITIES IN VIET NAM NOWADAYS

In order to further linking theory with practice in teaching theoretical subjects in universities in Viet Nam nowadays, it is required that educational institutions have to grasp and properly implement the following essential requirements:

Firstly, in the teaching process, it is compulsory to closely link theory with practice, and scientific knowledge with experience

In the teaching process, if lecturers only simply introducing theory without linking with practice, and presenting scientific knowledge without linking with experiences, their learners shall not be able to perceive the essences of theory, resulting in them not being able to apply theory on properly solving practical problems presented to them in practical occupational practice. Therefore, it is necessary to resolve the situation of purely teaching theory, departing from professional and occupational practice of learners. The linking of theory with practice must be implemented in all academic subjects of the curricula, in each lectures and in all of: Theoretical, occupational, ethical aspects and working methods and styles, so as to help the learners grasp both theoretical and practical issues for them to properly conduct their professional and occupational duties after graduation and form bases to continue to develop and improve themselves in the future. In order to achieve this, the teaching of theoretical subjects in universities cannot be doctrinaire and abstract lecturing, but must be closely linked with guidelines and policies of the Communist Party and the State of Viet Nam, and with the practice of the cause of national building and protecting. For teaching specific academic theoretical subjects directly related to occupational capabilities of students, it is necessary to set high standards of relating theory with their occupational practice in the future. Moreover, in the teaching process, the linking between theory with practice should not only be limited at considering political, social and occupational issues, but should also be presented in the education of ethics and working methods and styles of students. The teachers must base on the practice of duties, tasks, ethical qualities, working methods and styles of the learners for the purpose of introducing and analyzing to help the learners to find measures to resolve. Having achieved this, the teaching is no longer a simple transfer of information from the teachers to the learners, such teaching has become a creative activity that impacts on intellect, thinking, ethics, psychology and styles of the learners. This is aimed at equipping the learners with a system of scientific knowledge, fostering their thinking qualities, political consistency, revolutionary ethics, action capabilities and working methods and styles for the learners to properly conduct their duties and tasks after graduation.

Secondly, lecturers must firmly grasp theoretical knowledge of their lectures while must frequently update their practical knowledge

In the teaching process, lecturers must actively explore, research and grasp theoretical knowledge of the academic subjects and lectures they are in charge of. Only by grasping theoretical knowledge can lecturers select suitable theoretical contents of their lectures to be appropriately related to the world and national situations and occupational practice of students. At the same time, lecturers must select the types and degrees of practical

knowledge matching with the content of theoretical knowledge they are going to lecture. It is not that all theoretical issues of their lectures must be linked with practice, so lecturers have to select important, or hard to understand, or necessary to be clarified theoretical issues to present illustrative examples to make such theoretical issues to be easier to understand and persuasive to students. In order to obtain a attractive, vivid, updating, highly accurate and appropriate with the theoretical contents of their lectures, lecturers must not only grasp theoretical knowledge but also must have rich practical knowledge. Therefore, lecturers must read, research and obtain new information from books, newspapers, journals, Internet and other mass media in order to frequently and timely update knowledge as well as new development in the world, in our country and our Army. Also, lecturers must actively study official materials, especially classical works, documents of our Party's Plenums and Congresses, etc. because these are types of practice having high credibility and accuracy and being both specific and generalized. However, it is a must to see that while the practical life is both rich and dynamic, but not all practical aspects can be introduced in to the lectures, and that it is necessary to base on theoretical content to select appropriate contents and degree of practice. Practical aspects to be introduced to relate to and prove theoretical issues must be close to and appropriate with theoretical issues; for each practical aspects to be presented, lecturers must provide relevant analyses and explanations for the learners to see whether the linked practice is suitable with theory, has negative or positive implications, and to which theoretical issues these aspects are linked to. In order to improve the quality of teaching focused on linking theory with practice, one of the indispensable solutions is that lecturers must properly conduct the work of scientific research. This is because of the fact that scientific research is a highly generalized activity, requiring that the researchers must have capability of generalizing practice. By means of scientific research, lecturers not only grasp scientific knowledge, especially professional knowledge, manifested by their theoretical awareness, but also by their capabilities of approaching practice and their methods of resolving problems presented by practice. Enhancement of practice research and reality generalization and their introduction into lecture contents serves as a vivid and persuasive evidence, contributing to improving the practicality of teaching. By means of researching practice, generalizing reality of occupational activities in grassroots units of our Army, lecturers can acquire practical knowledge to be introduced in their lectures, and at the same time can verify scientific and practical values of the principles, categories, rules, directions and guidelines of our Party, etc. discussed in theory contents of lectures. In addition, lecturers must clearly know characteristics of their students. For each group of students, there shall be different contents, methods and forms of teaching. Also, for the same lecture content to be delivered to different group of learners, there shall be different methods and the use of practical knowledge shall be approached and explained in different characteristics and levels. Therefore, by clearly knowing characteristics of

their students, lecturers can select appropriate practical knowledge or proper ways of exploring and emphasizing certain aspects of the same events to match with specific characteristics of different teaching subjects.

Thirdly, in the teaching process, learners must play the central role in acquiring knowledge, forming occupational skills and attitudes in a proper manner

Linking theory with practice is a strong factor contributing to the process of making training and fostering process of educational institutions become the process of self-training and self-fostering, making learners always promote their activeness and proactiveness in thinking, exploring and creating in learning and exercising. Therefore, it is a must to combine teaching and learning processes into a unified whole. In such whole, the teaching process shall be the basis for the self-studying and self-exercising of learners. Learners should be deeply aware that quality of teaching and learning processes are determined by themselves. Based on that awareness, learners must build proper attitudes in self-studying and self-exercising, thoroughly remedying the way of passive learning, rote learning, or learning by heart without understanding essences of theory. Learners must go from theoretical and practical information equipped to them by teachers to conduct in-depth exploration of theory; after grasping theoretical viewpoints, learners must find relevant links to their own situations in terms of awareness, thinking and behaviors in order to promote correctness and remedy incorrectness. Only by this way can learners actually transform information provided by teachers into their own knowledge, create by themselves transformation and development of their own qualities and capabilities. In the work of teaching in universities in Viet Nam nowadays, there is a relatively consistent system of teaching forms and methods. The system consists of: Lecture delivery, discussion, self-study, exercises, practice, internship, observation, review for examinations, and examination. Especially, in universities in Social Sciences and Humanities block, there are other forms of scientific conferences, assignment, theses, etc. The system of teaching forms is always connected with the two aspects of training activity, namely linking theory with practice and theoretical thinking with reality, aiming at helping learners grasp essences of theoretical issues and step by step know how to relate and apply the same on their occupational practice in the future. If each teaching form is carefully researched, assigned with specific development objectives and applied seriously, and if the whole system is integrated in a close manner and aimed at shared objectives of training activities of educational institutions, these shall promote synergy to achieve high effectiveness in improving the quality of training in general, teaching theoretical subjects in particular.

Fourthly, in the teaching process, it is a must to aim for the important goal of forming in learners the capability of applying theory on practice

In order to properly deal with this issue, in the teaching process, it is necessary to especially pay attention to educate learners on scientific worldview and methodology of Marxism - Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought. Without scientific worldview, there shall be no proper stance in considering and resolving problems presented by occupational practice. Moreover, without scientific methodology, it is impossible to properly and creatively consider and resolve theoretical issues as well as occupational practice in the future of students. Scientific methodology shall help students to take objective reality and their occupational practice as bases for their thinking each time they determine their learning tasks and action plans. The consideration and analysis of objective reality must be based on historical-specific, comprehensive and developing perspectives for the purpose of grasping nature of things and phenomena and building scientific arguments to properly and creatively solve problems presented by practice, contributing to achieving proper professional and occupational performance of students after graduation. Properly dealing with objective reality, in fact, is the loyal and creative application of theoretical viewpoints and principles of Marxism - Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, guidelines and policies of the Communist Party and the State of Viet Nam, and summarized experience, etc. on occupational practice for the purpose of in-depth analysis and grasp of the motion rules. Once the reality changes, it is a must to generalize, supplement and develop theory in a proper manner, and definitely not to act in dogmatic, stereotyped and mechanistic manner. In order to create thinking capability capable of properly and creatively apply theory on practice, it is required that the teaching of theory in universities in Viet Nam nowadays is aimed at fostering for learners an intellectual capacity having both extensiveness and intensiveness, and a thinking capability which is both independent and critical, flexible and dynamic, and solid and consistent. An intellectual capacity with extensiveness shall help learners have capability of multi-faceted consideration to perceive and solve problems comprehensively. An intellectual capacity with intensiveness shall help learners analyze, summarize, and generalize in order to grasp nature of things, phenomena and to act according to rules. Independent and critical thinking helps learners, while implementing extensive democracy and listening to feedbacks from others, differentiate correctness and incorrectness to either accept or reject, not to act dependently, or to decide and act based on their own determination. Flexible and dynamic thinking helps learners apply principles in flexible manners in line with reality of current situation, avoid stereotyped and mechanistic methods, properly and timely resolve all tasks, and avoid rigidity and stagnation. Solid and consistent thinking has the utmost importance to students in the process of acquiring knowledge while learning at universities and in the process of conducting professional and occupational works later. If students do not have solid, consistent and responsive thinking, they cannot make use of their independence and creativeness in resolving tasks presented by occupational practice.

IV. CONCLUSION

To properly implement the principle of linking theory with practice in teaching theoretical subjects in universities in Viet Nam nowadays plays a significantly important role, contributing to properly carrying out two objectives: make students understand the nature of theory in the teaching process and know how to properly and creatively apply into practical occupational activities to properly perform their assigned tasks and duties according to the training objectives and training. In order to do this effectively, it is necessary to apply teaching forms covering both theory and practice; fostering methodology of Marxism - Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, directions and viewpoints of the Communist Party of Viet Nam in the current cause of reform, to help students strongly develop their thinking qualities, capabilities of grasping objective rules of matter and phenomena in order to act in line with these rules, achieve high results in learning, and creating bases for them to properly conduct their duties and tasks after graduation.

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