



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Discussion On Education in Vietnam from K. MARX and F. ENGELS' Perspective

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: May 11, 2024 Accepted: Jul 3, 2024	<p>This dissertation seeks to analyze the educational ideologies of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, with a specific focus on the characteristics, approaches, and significance of the state in the realm of education. This theoretical framework is used to analyze and evaluate the current condition of education in Vietnam, in order to establish the degree to which the country's education system adheres to Marxist principles. The study utilizes a qualitative methodology to examine the writings of Marx and Engels regarding education, and to compare their viewpoints with the present condition of education in Vietnam. The assessment of the implementation of Marxist educational concepts in the Vietnamese setting relies on official government documents, reports, and statistics. Vietnam's education system has made substantial progress in incorporating the fundamental principles of Marx and Engels concerning the essence, approaches, and function of the state in education. Significant accomplishments encompass guaranteeing widespread availability of education, incorporating diverse dimensions of education (cognitive, physical, and vocational), and upholding the state's responsibility as a patron and overseer of educational endeavors. Nevertheless, there are still obstacles to overcome, especially in ensuring the quality of education and managing the increasing participation of private enterprises and foreign investment in the education system. In order to truly achieve international standards and successfully develop persons who embody modern socialist values, additional fundamental reforms are required. Important actions include improving inspection and monitoring techniques, promoting independent quality accreditation, enforcing rigorous guidelines for educational services, creating specific support systems for marginalized populations, and giving priority to the integration of STEM/STEAM in curriculum development. This dissertation aims to enhance the comprehension of the application and modification of Marxist educational concepts within the distinctive socio-economic framework of Vietnam. This emphasizes the importance of Marx and Engels' ideas in influencing an educational system that focuses on the comprehensive growth of individuals, social fairness, and the seamless integration of academic pursuits, practical abilities, and moral principles.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) were highly famous philosophers who had a profound impact on human history. Throughout their lifetimes, they committed themselves to the mission of emancipating the proletariat and toiling masses, tackling diverse facets of society, such as

education, in their penetrating literary works. The ideas of Marx and Engels on education were intricately connected to their criticism of capitalism and wage labor, specifically addressing the problem of child labor in bourgeois society. This laid the groundwork for the subsequent emergence of the neo-Marxist sociology of education.

This paper seeks to examine and evaluate the perspectives of these two influential intellectuals on the essence, approaches, and significance of the state in education. Marx and Engels' main points regarding education can be summarised by analysing their works on the topic. (1) Education should be public, free, and accessible to everyone. The level of material production in society, especially the economic-social relations, has a significant impact on education and determines its nature. (2) It is important to incorporate physical education, intellectual education, and material production into a comprehensive educational framework. This framework should emphasise the connection between education and labour. (3) The state should take on the responsibility of sponsoring education rather than directly providing it.

This theoretical framework will be used to analyse and evaluate the current situation of education in Vietnam. Vietnam's education system has recently undergone substantial revisions, aiming to conform to the fundamental concepts articulated by Marx and Engels. Nevertheless, in order to fully comply with global benchmarks and successfully foster contemporary socialist individuals who possess robust ethical principles, extensive knowledge, proficient expertise, and innovative thinking, additional comprehensive transformations are imperative, particularly in terms of quality assurance with an intensified state involvement. This paper will explore the accomplishments and obstacles of Vietnam's education system, taking into account the educational ideas of Marx and Engels. It will provide valuable insights and recommendations for the system's future advancement.

Theoretical Framework

In *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), Engels acknowledged that children from working-class families encountered greater challenges in their education due to society's failure to adequately educate this particular group, resulting in their exposure to more challenging living conditions. Engels highlighted that the education provided to the offspring of working families was deemed essential and suitable by the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, the bourgeoisie expressed a lack of desire for workers to receive an education. He stated: "If the bourgeoisie prioritizes the well-being of workers due to their necessity, it is not unexpected that they only provide education to workers that aligns with their own interests." The magnitude of that extent is rather low. (...) The act of providing education to workers yields few financial gains for the bourgeoisie, and conversely, it may engender heightened apprehension among them [1,22].

In his seminal work, *Capital and The Communist Manifesto*, Marx expounded about the correlation between the essence of education and the prevailing level of material output within society at that era. The nature of education in capitalist society was profoundly shaped by the bourgeois ideology. In society, education was segregated into distinct groups, each assigned certain economic functions. The purpose of education for children belonging to the working class was primarily focused on facilitating their labor in factories, so enabling them to contribute to the economic production of capitalist industrialism. Therefore, it is evident that Marx recognized a significant characteristic of education, namely that education is shaped by and inherently interconnected with the material production level of society.

In addition, Marx recognized and held the belief that education, facilitated by the state apparatus, played a crucial role in the capitalist superstructure. Its primary function was to perpetuate, uphold, and validate class distinctions, inequality, and the accumulation of capital. Marx's perspective on education was consistently included into his examination of capitalism and wage labor, particularly

the issue of child labor in bourgeois society. This laid the groundwork for the subsequent development of the neo-Marxist sociology of education.

Marx and Engels identified the characteristics and hierarchical structure of education in bourgeois society. They assigned communists the responsibility of transforming education by tangible measures, aiming to eliminate the utilization of education as a means to perpetuate social inequity. The Manifesto of the Communist Party explicitly articulates this notion. Marx advocated for universal access to education in public schools. The current state of children's factory labor abolition... [2] This observation highlights an additional aspect of education as highlighted by Marx and Engels, namely the imperative for education to be universally accessible through free public education. The realization of such an education is contingent upon the future establishment of a communist society.

Marx not only examined the essence of education but also made reference to the overarching approaches to education. Marx systematically and coherently presents the idea in *Capital*, although he does not explicitly refer to it as the "method of education." He states that later education will enable every child to combine intellectual education, physical education, and productive labor by a certain age. This approach not only serves as a means to enhance societal productivity, but also represents the sole approach to cultivate individuals who possess comprehensive development, a way that has been alluded to from within the machine itself [3].

Marx asserted that an essential approach to education should encompass a synthesis of physical education, intellectual education (knowledge), and material production, specifically through engagement in factory and workshop activity. This approach aims to facilitate experiential learning, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. While expressing criticism towards the exploitation of child labor in textile mills in England or France, Marx maintained that it is necessary for children to acquire knowledge and skills through engaging in work-related tasks. Nevertheless, it is crucial that these forms of labor are suitable for the child's age and that learning be complemented by intervals of relaxation, preventing youngsters from being excessively engrossed in a single task. Marx penned: "In my perspective, education has three fundamental components: One aspect to consider is intellectual education. There are two main components to consider: physical education, encompassing the instruction of gymnastics and military training. The third aspect is technical education, which imparts children and youth with a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental concepts underlying all industrial processes. Additionally, it cultivates the habit of utilizing the most basic tools found in various industries. The escalating intricacy of the instructional content pertaining to intellectual, physical, and technical education necessitates its alignment with the categorization of children and adolescents based on their age. The revenue generated from the sale of the items manufactured by the technical schools should partially offset the expenses incurred by those schools. The integration of intellectual, physical, and technical education, in conjunction with remunerated active employment, has the potential to elevate the socioeconomic status of the working class above that of the middle and upper classes" [4,24].

The realization of a multidimensional education, encompassing vocational, physical, and intellectual education, necessitates the attainment of political power by the working class. Acquiring democracy is the initial prerequisite for attaining political power. Democracy, in this context, is defined as "a type of government or a type of governance" [5]. Marx posited that once the working class attained political authority and established a distinct class state, and subsequently a non-class state, the segregation of educational content (vocational, physical, intellectual) would cease to exist in schools. This is because the division of labor roles in capitalist society gave rise to the segregation of educational content. The workers exclusively engaged in material production duties, employing physical labor inside factory settings, hence necessitating vocational education as their sole requirement. In a similar vein, the offspring of laboring households received instruction that mostly focused on vocational skills, whereas academic subjects such as mathematics, geometry, and

languages, which were deemed impractical for industrial labor, were not imparted. Furthermore, physical education was not accorded significant importance.

Marx made reference to the state's involvement in education while expressing disapproval of the German Social Democratic Party's stance in the Critique of the Gotha Program (1875). The SPD argued that the state should solely serve as a sponsor of education, rather than actively engaging in the educational process. This perspective was deemed detrimental to the perpetuation of capitalist society and the accumulation of capital. The differentiation between the state's position as a supporter of education and its activities as an educator is evident in the subsequent excerpt, which has subsequently been further explored in contemporary perspectives on the state's function.

The provision of public education by the state is highly unacceptable. The utilization of a comprehensive legislation to govern the allocation of funds for public schools, the professional qualifications of educational personnel, the curriculum of subjects taught, and the appointment of state inspectors to oversee the enforcement of these legal provisions, as observed in the United States, represents a notable departure from the notion of designating the state as the sole educator of the populace. Contrarily, it is imperative to eradicate any form of governmental or ecclesiastical influence on educational institutions [6,23].

In the contemporary context, in order to uphold the principle of universal access to free education, the state assumes a central role as the primary financier of educational endeavors. This is achieved through the establishment of state regulations governing the administration of training programs, examinations, and the accreditation of educational standards. Additionally, the implementation of a standardized national curriculum is undertaken to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all individuals, while simultaneously mitigating and diminishing social disparities among diverse groups.

Marx and Engels primarily concentrated on examining capitalist society in the late 19th century, influenced by the rise of industrial production and the blue-collar working class. Their objective was to emancipate the working class and propose a utopian society - communist society - for the future. Their examination of education was limited to preliminary concepts when assessing the experiences of the working class and their offspring. By analyzing the works of Marx and Engels that address their perspectives on education, the primary arguments regarding education put forth by these two renowned authors can be succinctly described as follows:

Regarding the nature of education, public education refers to education that is accessible to all individuals and provided at no cost. The amount of material production in society, particularly the economic-social ties, has a significant impact on and determines education.

Two important aspects to consider in the context of education are the integration of physical education, intellectual education, and material creation within a comprehensive educational framework. The correlation between education and labor is crucial.

Regarding the role of the state in education, it is imperative that the state assumes the responsibility of sponsoring education rather than directly engaging in its provision.

METHODOLOGY

This article utilises a qualitative methodology to examine the educational ideologies of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and juxtapose them with the present condition of education in Vietnam. The main sources for this research consist of the writings of Marx and Engels that specifically discuss the topic of education. These include "The Condition of the Working Class in England" (1845), "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (1848), "Capital, Volume I" (1867), "Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council" (1866), and "Critique of the Gotha Programme" (1875). The writings

are analysed to extract the fundamental arguments and perspectives of Marx and Engels concerning the nature, methodologies, and function of the state in education.

In order to evaluate the application of Marxist educational concepts in Vietnam, official government records, reports, and statistics are employed. These sources include the Education Law (2019), various government decrees and resolutions related to education such as Decree 86/2015/ND-CP, Resolution 90/CP/1997, Decree 73/1999/ND-CP, Resolution 35/NQ-CP/2019, Decree 135/2018/ND-CP, and Decree 86/2018/ND-CP. Additionally, data from the General Statistics Office of Vietnam and the Ministry of Education and Training, as well as the 13th National Congress Documents of the Communist Party of Vietnam (2021) are also considered.

The analysis commences by initially presenting the fundamental concepts of Marx and Engels pertaining to education, with a specific emphasis on the characteristics, techniques, and function of the state. Subsequently, these concepts are juxtaposed with the present state of education in Vietnam, evaluating the degree to which the nation's educational framework adheres to or diverges from the tenets of Marxism. The comparison is grounded on three primary dimensions: (1) the essence of education, encompassing its accessibility, affordability, and the impact of material production on education; (2) educational approaches, with a specific emphasis on the incorporation of physical education, intellectual education, and material production; and (3) the involvement of the state in education, particularly in terms of financial support and ensuring quality.

This study intends to offer insights into the accomplishments and difficulties of Vietnam's education system by utilising qualitative analysis and examining it through the lens of Marx and Engels' educational ideology. The results will be used as a foundation for providing suggestions for future advancement and restructuring in Vietnamese education, aiming to foster contemporary socialist citizens who possess robust ethical principles, vast knowledge, proficient abilities, and innovative thinking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

When analysing the education system in Vietnam in relation to the principles put out by Marx and Engels, several prominent themes emerge:

The essence of education

In 2015, the UN claimed that Vietnam had made remarkable progress in achieving universal primary education and extending early childhood care and education since 2000. Public elementary education is provided at no cost, but public preschools charge reasonable tuition rates, as stipulated by Decree 86/2015/ND-CP. Nevertheless, low-income families residing in rural, hilly, ethnic minority, and economically challenged regions continue to encounter difficulties in meeting the financial demands of these tuition fees. The 2019 Education Law modified and broadened universal and mandatory education to include the lower secondary level, confirming the communist character of the Vietnamese education system.

The Doi Moi (Renovation) period, which began in 1986, signified the formal integration of private institutions, both local and foreign, into the country's education system. The socialisation of education is regulated by legislative measures such as Resolution 90/CP/1997 and Decree 73/1999/ND-CP. Consequently, education has shifted from being exclusively a public social welfare to a commercial service that operates according to market principles, serving as a commodity to complement the constrained capacity of the public education system.

Instructional techniques

The 2006 General Education Programme, which was introduced following the enactment of the 2005 Education Law, sought to cultivate and improve students' knowledge and abilities throughout all

three educational tiers. Nevertheless, considering the consequences of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Vietnam's education system encounters both favourable circumstances and difficulties in enhancing and harmonising with social, parental, and student expectations.

The 2018 General Education Programme lays the groundwork for substantial modifications in content, character, and instructional approaches, in response to the worldwide trend towards competency-based education. The new programme highlights the equitable significance of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in cultivating students who are well-rounded. This requires the implementation of dynamic teaching and learning methods to cultivate flexible and receptive thinking among educators and learners.

Moreover, the genuine incorporation of theoretical information with practical activities is essential in fostering, improving, evaluating, and measuring students' skills. Fields such as STEM and STEAM, which combine science, mathematics, engineering, crafts, and art, have led to a fresh perspective on subjects that prioritise practicality and vocational skills. This approach aligns with Marx and Engels' concept of integrating education with labour.

The government's role in education

Vietnam's education system operates on a socialist framework, where the state takes responsibility for supporting educational activities. This ensures that the education system is accessible to all and promotes social equality. The implementation of this system is facilitated through legal papers, decrees, and circulars. The aggregate public spending on education has exhibited a steady and continuous increase, with the educational allocation fluctuating between 90% and 91.7% from 2011 to 2016.

The government has constantly given primary and lower secondary education a higher level of importance in order to accomplish education for everyone, as seen by the deployment of cash and human resources. Decrees 135/2018/ND-CP and 86/2018/ND-CP have introduced a more advantageous legal framework with enhanced incentives for foreign investors in Vietnam's education sector.

Nevertheless, the participation of private entities and foreign investment efforts in education can have negative consequences for marginalised communities, including children from economically underprivileged households and migrant workers in urban areas. Furthermore, the burgeoning private education industry in Vietnam necessitates addressing quality control concerns pertaining to private educational institutions.

In order to tackle these difficulties and adhere to the educational ideals of Marx and Engels, a number of steps need to be implemented. These measures encompass improving inspection and monitoring techniques that go beyond relying solely on administrative reports, advocating for independent quality accreditation by well-regarded international organisations, implementing stringent guidelines on the promotion and distribution of educational services, developing efficient systems to support marginalised populations, and giving priority to the integration of STEM/STEAM in curriculum development.

Vietnam's education system has made significant advancements in adhering to the fundamental concepts of Marx and Engels concerning the essence, methodologies, and function of the state in education. However, in order to truly meet worldwide standards and successfully develop modern socialist individuals, additional fundamental adjustments are necessary, particularly in quality assurance with an increased state role.

CONCLUSION

Vietnam's education system has achieved significant strides in implementing the core principles of Marx and Engels about the nature, methods, and role of the state in education, thanks to ongoing reform initiatives in recent years. Nevertheless, in order to genuinely attain global benchmarks, further extensive changes are required, particularly in the realm of quality assurance overseen by an enhanced state role. Under appropriate guidance, the education system in Vietnam has the potential to effectively cultivate contemporary socialist individuals who possess robust ethical values, extensive knowledge, proficient abilities, and innovative thinking, hence propelling the nation's sustainable socio-economic progress.

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