

Vietnamese Historical Education From 1986: The Silenced History

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ABSTRACT: During the turbulent post-colonial era of Vietnam, many controversial events cast doubt on the legitimacy of the ruling government. Interestingly, however, such events are seldom discussed on mainstream platforms. With that in mind, the central idea of this paper is to demonstrate how the Vietnamese government used education to conceal controversial historical events to maintain legitimacy in the public eye. By characterizing education as a method Vietnam used to foster nationalism within citizens, the research paper allows us to analyze the nation-building process of Vietnam and how such regimes maintain power and authority. Much research has been published on the different mechanisms governments use to retain power, predominantly through media. However, to date, no research has been conducted examining the Vietnamese education system as a tool for political control. This research paper focused on three key sensitive topics: Land reform, Nhan Van-Giai Pham, and boat people. Using online surveys and content analysis, this paper showed that there are generally low awareness rates about such topics, partially due to descriptions of such events in the national curriculum being mitigated, minimalized, and almost non-present. Therefore, this shows the government's success in regulating and concealing such history from the general public. However, further research could examine whether or not education is the driving force for political control if there are more prominent factors.

KEYWORDS: Historical negationism; Education; Nationalism; Vietnam; Censorship.

■ Introduction

On August 1945, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was established. The government was ruled by the Viet Minh or Vietnamese Workers' Party (later Vietnamese Communist Party) as the head of the state. 1945 marked a crucial period for Vietnam when the country declared its independence from the French.¹ However, it wasn't until the 30th of April in 1975 did the country reunite with Saigon. The reunification day also carries another name which is the Fall of Saigon. This foreshadowed the conflicting perspectives of the North and South people. As the communist regime took over the country, the government established control over all aspects. It is recorded that after the reunification, some of the Second Republics' officials were prosecuted for their alliance with the US, and some were sent to 're-education' camps.²

Nevertheless, 1986 marked a time of reform (or "Doi Moi"), following which there have been more opportunities for discussions and diverse perspectives on past events rather than the government's dominant historical narratives. Learning from the mistakes of past Communist states, China's open door policy, and the USSR's Perestroika, the Vietnamese government took an integrated approach of cautious and gradual changes in terms of economics and politics.³ By loosening its censorship and allowing for more freedom of speech, the country's politics gradually evolved but maintained its core as a one-party state and a commitment to socialism.

With systematic policy reforms, the country broke out of its isolationism and liberalized its agricultural market to revive the economy and re-establish its international relations. As the country opened itself to more economic and political opportunities, there were more changes in the regulation of

information that allowed for more information on the events that took place before, during, and after the Vietnam war to be published and available to the public.⁴ With more open avenues for academic and political freedom, studying politically controversial topics such as land reform made significant progress during this time through multiple resource channels, from official documents to oral histories.⁵ This period has allowed for more nuanced debate and argument on numerous sensitive historical events.

Despite these changes, conversations on highly controversial events questioning the government's legitimacy are still minimal. At the time, confrontational groups that advocated for abolishing socialism or democratic reforms were highly persecuted.

Today, websites on these past events are censored, and some journalists are reported to be blacklisted and even persecuted when writing about these sensitive incidents to criticize the Vietnamese government. A book by Thomas A. Bass called *Censorship in Vietnam* illustrated this quite extensively using recorded interviews with past journalists.⁶ These interviews gave many insights into how the Vietnamese government has controlled the press industry and shut down articles and work written by journalists. This is done mainly for censorship to retain the government's political control and legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

However, due to the extensive censorship, academic papers on history concealment in Vietnam are quite limited. Precisely, ones on education as a mechanism for political control. Some recent studies have also been written on this topic, but they have yet to be able to account for education in Vietnam as a case study. Learning how education can work as a tool for po-

litical control will allow us to analyze the complex relationship between the government and the education system. Furthermore, we can examine the ethical problems surrounding how history is taught and even the purpose of teaching history. It raises the question of whether discrepancies in the factual accuracy of historical information are worth the trade-off of creating a better united and patriotic population.

This paper examines how the Vietnamese government concealed its history after 1986. By examining one of the methods nations use to foster nationalism within citizens, namely through education, the research paper allows us to analyze the regime's nation-building process and how such regimes maintain power and authority. Using work done by past research to explain the term 'history concealment' and the three key events- The Land Reform, Nhan Van Giai Pham, and Boat people- the study aims to give a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the aforementioned topics. Furthermore, the research will also analyze the national curriculum and a general survey to dive deep into how the government has tried to avoid these controversial matters and to which extent this has been successful.

■ Literature review

Historical negationism and denialism:

Historical falsification and negationism are not ideas exclusive to Vietnam. Three notable ones are the historical falsification that took place in Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the US. Such incidents shall be discussed to examine common methods, themes, and motivations surrounding historical falsification.

Ripoll (1994) examines how the Cuban government twisted the words and ideas of José Martí, a famous Cuban nationalist and political figure. Martí was a man who desired a free and democratic Cuba during his time as the leader of the Cuban Revolutionary Party. However, over time, the Cuban Communist Party began twisting such ideas to fit their narrative, saying that their authoritative and tyrannical regime aligned with Martí's words. They hid his original works and began championing the party based on his beliefs, which garnered public attention because Martí was well-liked and respected. Therefore, the authoritarian Cuban government managed to sway their citizens' opinions through the falsification of the ideologies of a well-respected public figure in the community and did so through control of information and deception.⁷

Similar deception can be seen in how the Soviet Union approached historical concealment. Fedor (1994) discusses how the Soviet Union approaches its past wars to glorify the Soviet Union and undermine the allies' victory.⁸ Such falsification is handled uniquely in this case, however, and it relies on two main ideas. Ironically, the first of these ideas is for the government to emphasize the truth in history education. The authoritative regime of the Soviet Union began to urge the citizens to care about the quality of their history and encouraged them to seek the truth.

Interestingly, the second step involved the deception of this skeptical population. After establishing historical validity and accuracy as being of the utmost importance, the Soviet Union began claiming that the information and history provided by

the West, especially regarding WWII, was false and deceptive. The already skeptical population then began to believe the Soviet Union's version of history, as they cast aside the prevalent documents and facts as historical falsifications. Thus, by sparking doubts about the credibility of the truth, the Soviet Union managed to conceal its history and convince its citizens of its constructed history to maintain order and authority.

What both of these cases have in common are their motivation and their general mechanisms. Both incidents involved authoritative regimes seeking to either gain or maintain authority. Both of these case studies involved some manipulation of accurate information, either through hiding such information completely or making people doubt the credibility of valid sources. Moreover, both cases revolve around a critical concept that is important to the public. In Cuba's case, it was the figure of José Martí. In the case of the Soviet Union, the manufactured importance was created around the importance of accurate history. These events provide some context and general trends surrounding the concealment of history and illustrate the prevalence of this phenomenon in the world.

However, it is noteworthy that not only authoritarian states concealed and manipulated their histories but also democratic states like the United States. 'Lies My Teacher Told Me' by James W. Loewen shined a light on the topic showing how the US national curriculum also hid its many atrocities, such as the Vietnam War, glaring over essential issues such as racism and slavery and showed- what the author coined- the "Disney version of history".⁹ By the omission of controversial issues, the US national historical curriculum aimed to impart patriotism within its people. Therefore, it can be seen that the trend of historical concealment is quite prevalent and is not a phenomenon exclusive to a one-party state.

The land reform in 1956:

Land reform is perhaps one of the most infamous events throughout modern Vietnamese history. Land reform was a program to eradicate lordism and redistribute lands to the peasants in Vietnam from 1953 to 1956. The goal was to establish a nationalist and social revolution free from foreign interventions, promote mass education and economic development, move toward a more egalitarian society, and mobilize the poor by giving them power and control of lands. However, the campaign was not all rainbows and sunshine. Many were falsely prosecuted. Chi (1962) suggests that the 'bloodbath' had a recorded estimate of 5% of the overall population in North Vietnam at the time. However, there is no authorized evidence of the casualties caused by the event. Different sources from the Western nations to South Vietnam reported various statistics, but it is still unclear how many people were executed during this process. The author estimates that around 3000- 15000 people were executed.¹⁰

However, there are some noticeable differences between the literature on the topic. The debate that D.Vo touched on was the impact of the land reform. One side labeled the event as a 'bloodbath' with massive casualties, while the other side emphasized the positive economic results and transformation it has on the people on the ground. Nevertheless, it is evident from all these articles that the controversial matter did bring

about massive political implications. From the class conflict to mass migration during the 1950s, it shows how the prestige and unity of the VWP have been shaken significantly after this event.

These sources provided a detailed account of the event and its impact on Vietnam's history. However, they didn't investigate the government incentives to hide these events.

Nhân Văn–Giai Phẩm:

Nhan Van Giai Pham means Humanity (Nhan Van) Masterwork (Giai Pham). NVGP was a dissenting political movement during the 1950s led by many famous intellectuals in Vietnam. With a focus on calling out the state party ruling of Vietnam on its repressive and corrupted dictatorship, the movement was infamous for its anti-communist sentiment.¹¹ it aimed to promote more liberal and democratic values such as pluralism and demand more protection in terms of individual rights such as freedom of expression.¹²

Four main factors have contributed to the birth of NVGP. Firstly, it was the rise of freedom of speech and the dissent movement against the repressive communist movement in Poland, Hungary, and China. The movement of de-Stalinization in Poland and Hungary gained traction after the secret speech held by Nikita Krushrev- a famous political figure that called out Stalin's Despotism. Additionally, 1956 witnessed the Hundred Flower campaign in China by Mao's government that, on the surface, seemed to encourage citizens to express their opinions or even opposition to the current party. However, the Hundred Flower Campaign persecuted many intellectuals who spoke up against the Communist government. The uprising inspired the domestic situation in Vietnam and incited a similar dissent movement against the communist ruling party.

Secondly, another factor that incited the movement was the Land reforms in 1956. The event was controversial because its mistakes led to the prosecution of many innocent people. Such reform aims to redistribute lands to those of the lower class, but the inadequacy in the process has led to the false prosecution of many supposed 'landlords.' This event has created class conflict bringing chaos to the already shaky newly-established government. Consequently, even though land reform isn't the primary topic discussed in the NVGP movement, the legacy it left behind instilled unrest in the group members.

Thirdly, many leading intellectuals, from artists to journalists who mainly worked for the party-state in the media industry, observed the popularization of Maoist radical ideologies regarding government policies. The government enacted severe censorship and rectification campaigns to reinforce the communist ideology. They only allow art forms that have been designed to uplift the revolutionary spirit while putting harsh standards on the different art forms.

Finally, the Geneva accord allowed for mass migration from the North to the South, where the anti-communist sentiment stood strong. This allowed many intellectuals to voice their opinion and firmly express their dissent views on the VWP.

However, the movement faced a crackdown by the government, with some critical members executed. The government

villainized and publicly ostracized the movement by labeling them as "reactionists", "traitors," or "dissidents" through media campaigns. People associated with the movement were forced into educational rectification and even hard labor. Nguyen Huu Dang and Thuy An- two leading members of the movement, were executed in the People's Court of Hanoi for 15 years (January 19, 1960). Some would also get sent to the countryside for 'compulsory work assignment.' In 1956, the movement died down and became an unspoken topic since then.

All of the articles on the topic demonstrate a similar trend elaborating on the government's reluctance to accept opposing ideas and prosecution of key members of the movement.

Boat people 1975:

The fall of Saigon in April 1975 marked the beginning of the massive migration movement of over a million Vietnamese.¹³ Around 130,000 people escaped the country that month for being directly involved with the American presence in South Vietnam.¹⁴ The reasons can be traced back to the fear of the communist regime in the North that was taking control of the south, where the anti-communist sentiment was ubiquitous. The re-education camp was one of the central policies the communist state had implemented that led to this event. To the Vietnamese government, the model was used to help integrate the former enemies into the new community. Those subjected to these camps can usually be classified into main categories: those who were affiliated with the US and those who tried to speak up and rebelled against the standing government.¹ There are conflicting reports on the conditions of these camps. One report stated that the conditions of the camps were only suitable for those with optimal physical conditions, but some others argued that it was pretty adequate.¹⁶ However, despite the seemingly benevolent intention, this created insecurities and instilled fear in the citizens of the North, leading to their desperate movement to go abroad.

1979 witnessed another wave of migration of Chinese-Vietnamese descent due to the ostracization the community received after the country declared independence. One observer estimates the number of casualties to be 25,000 to 50,000 people during this process.

There is consistent evidence demonstrating how the mass migration of boat people is highly controversial. With mass casualties, the event shows the government's failure to protect the interests of their citizens and thus questions their credibility overall.

Vietnamese education:

In general, there needs to be more research that directly touches on the matter of historical education in Vietnam, especially in the teachings on three highly controversial topics mentioned above. However, one notable research on Vietnamese education is on politics in higher education. In 'Moral education or political education in the Vietnamese educational system?', Doan emphasized how the curriculum for students at all levels highly emphasized the political teachings of works like Marxist-Leninist Philosophy, Marxist political economics, scientific Socialism, Ho Chi Minh

thought, and history of the Vietnamese Communist Party. Doan highlighted how socialist morality is spread through education by making these topics mandatory for all Vietnamese college students. Though the article focuses more on the teachings of morals in schools, it gives us many insights into how the government uses education to spread awareness and understanding of the standing system in Vietnam.¹⁷ However, the research fails to account for a more in-depth understanding of the national secondary school curriculum due to its focus on higher education.

■ Methods

Two main methods were used to investigate my research question. Firstly, using an online survey that touches on three highly sensitive topics helps to examine people's knowledge and awareness of these historical events. The three events were: The land reform in 1952, Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm, and Boat people. By using convenience sampling, this survey provides a general overview of 4 primary age demographics (high school students, adults below 30 years old, adults between 30-40 years old, and adults that are over 40 years old) and how well-informed they are on these events on a scale of 1-5. This method will demonstrate a more recent account of how prevalent the censorship of these sensitive historical events is.

Additionally, the respondent's answers are kept anonymous throughout this whole process. This is because the research topics are highly sensitive and may cause harm to participants if their identities are leaked. Furthermore, ensuring the participant's anonymity also enhances the validity of the result reducing the risks of the participants lying for their security.

Secondly, the research paper examines the student historical curriculum through textbooks and teacher's books. This section analyzes the length and language used when describing these susceptible events in the established curriculum made by the Prime minister of Education in Vietnam from 1986 until today.

By combining these two methods, the research would bring about a comprehensive and dated account of the population's knowledge of these highly controversial topics.

■ Results and Discussion

Survey:

This research collected data from an original survey. The survey consisted of 3 questions with a 5-point Likert scale response. By using convenience sampling, the survey has 80 respondents across four primary age demographics (14-18 years old, 18-30 years old, 30-40 years old, and >40 years old). The respondents' answers were completely anonymous, and only each respondent's age was recorded. The survey was carried out in 5 days, from the 28th of April to the 2nd of May 2022.

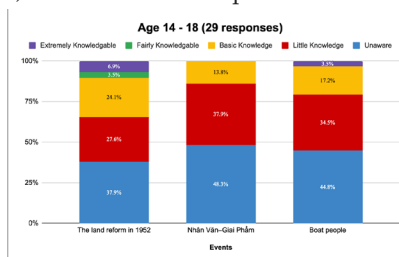


Figure 1: Responses from 14-18 years old participants.

Figure 1 illustrates participants' responses from ages 14 to 18 on the three key events: The Land reform, Nhân Văn- Giai Pham, and Boat people. There is an apparent trend of most people responding to being unaware and having little knowledge about the five events. Notably, only a tiny portion of people are highly knowledgeable or relatively knowledgeable about such events.

It can be seen through the survey results that across all three topics -Land reform, Nhân Văn- Giai Pham, and Boat people, 'unaware' is the most common answer taking up 37.9%, 48.3%, and 44.8%, respectively. Following this, people who responded having 'little knowledge' of the topics come second with around 27.8% to 34.5% of participants from this group.'

As regards responses on being 'extremely knowledgeable' and having 'basic knowledge' on the aforementioned topics, the answer is considerably low, with all three categories constituting around 1/3 of the participants from this age group.

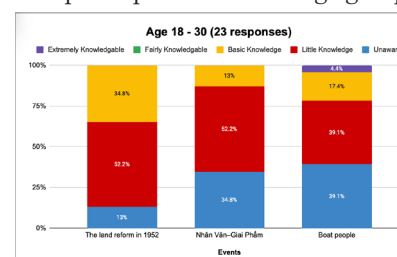


Figure 2: Responses from 18-30 years old participants.

Figure 2 represents the 18-30 years old demographic answer on the three key events: The Land reform, Nhân Văn- Giai Pham, and Boat people. The chart has some notable features. There appears to be greater overall knowledge compared to the previous age category, with most responses at least demonstrating little knowledge. Nevertheless, 'unaware' and 'little knowledge' seem to be the most typical responses.

The poll results show that little knowledge is the most favorable answer accounting for 52.2% of all responses on land reform and Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm and 39.1% on boat people. Additionally, the proportion of those who answered 'unaware' and had 'basic knowledge' is quite similar, roughly 13% to 40%.

However, it is interesting to note that for the topic of boat people, only one response (4.5%) was recorded to be 'extremely knowledgeable'.

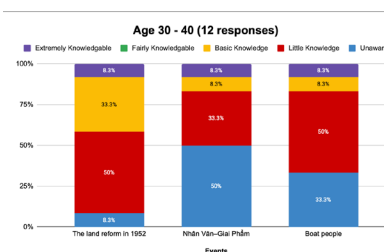


Figure 3: Responses from 30-40 years old participants.

Figure 3 represents the 30 - 40 years old demographic answer on the three key events: The Land reform, Nhân Văn- Giai Pham, and Boat people. There appears to be similar knowledge relative to the last age category, with most responses at least

demonstrating little knowledge for all events except “Nhan Van- Giai Pham.”

The poll results show that little knowledge is the most favorable answer for land reform and boat people, accounting for 50% of all responses. However, for “Nha Van- Giai Pham,” the most common answer seems to be unaware, with a 50% response rate.

Nevertheless, compared to the previous categories, there is a notable increase in the number of “extremely knowledgeable” responses.

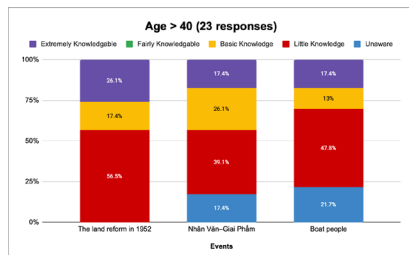


Figure 4: Responses from participants older than 40.

Figure 4 represents the answers of the demographic older than 40 on the three key events: The Land reform, Nhan Van-Giai Pham, and Boat people. This chart shows this age group has more excellent overall knowledge compared to all the previous categories, with only a tiny portion of unaware answers and no responses for the land reform event. However, “little knowledge” seems to be the most common category, making up roughly 40% to 55% of the total responses.

Looking at all the responses from all of the categories, it becomes apparent that the age category of people older than 40 has the more excellent overall knowledge about such events, with a low rate of unaware responses and a high amount of highly knowledgeable responses. Alternatively, the 14 - 18-year-old category has the lowest knowledge rate, with an unaware rate of around 40% and very few extremely knowledgeable responses. Regarding events, the land reform of 1952 appears to be the most well-known, and Nha Van- Giai Pham generally tends to be the least famous of the three events.

Content analysis:

Since grades 9 and 12 are the two grades that study Vietnam's modern history (the study's time frame), this research paper will focus primarily on examining the national history book of these two grades. From 1985 until now, there have only been two officially recorded versions of the Vietnamese history book- one published in 1985 and one in 2014. This paper will investigate the language used in how these controversial events were portrayed and the amount of description and length it has in proportion to the rest of the book.



Figure 5: The grade 9 student history book in 1985.

In figure 5, there are roughly 1.5 pages (pg.77, 78) out of 120 pages in the Vietnamese grade 12 history book (1985) that mentioned land reform in 1955-1975. The language used

when describing the event is positive. The book writes about the impact of the land reform in 1955, with 850,000 lands, 100,000 buffaloes, and 2,000,000 farming tools distributed to peasants. The book describes how this event has granted farmers 'lifelong dreams' (ước mơ bao đời của dân tộc ta). The book never mentioned events such as Nhan Van Giai Pham or the Boat people.

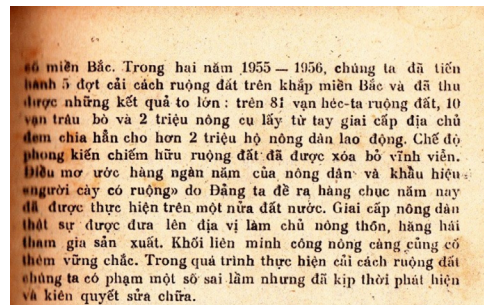


Figure 6: The grade 12 student history book in 1988.

In figure 6, there are roughly ½ pages (pg. 80) out of 204 pages in the Vietnamese grade 12 history book (1985) that mentioned land reform in 1955-1975. The section focuses primarily on describing the reform's success on the peasant. However, the section did say that the government did make some mistakes during this trial but never went in-depth with this information. Additionally, the language use, content, and length of this passage, compared to Figure 5, remained relatively the same.

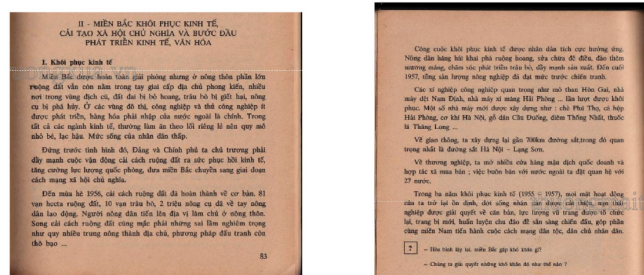


Figure 7: The grade 9 student history book in 1999.

In figure 7, there is 1 page (pg. 83,84) out of 134 in grade 9 official history book (1999). Land reform is mainly described positively with its impact on the redistribution of land, buffaloes, and farming tools. Furthermore, this section also mentioned how the reform made mistakes in wrongly classifying the lords, but overall, the reform is described as a success. Even though the increase in word counts relative to Figure 6 suggests an increased level of coverage, it doesn't add any noticeable or constructive content, and the general ideas being discussed are the same, describing the reform's success on the peasant. However, the section did say that the government did make some mistakes during this trial but never went in-depth with this information. Additionally, the language use, content, and length of this passage, compared to Figure 5, remained relatively the same.

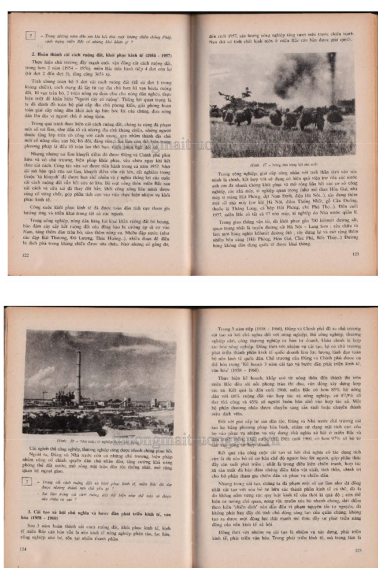


Figure 8: The grade 12 student history book in 2000.

In figure 8, land reform in 1955 - 1975 is discussed on around four pages (pg. 122-125) out of 205 pages in the grade 12 history book (2000). While this is a significant addition in terms of length, the content remains almost the same with nothing new being added. Land reform is once again mentioned for its positive impacts on the people. Similarly, the book again says that the government encountered mistakes, such as wrongly categorizing the landowners. In line with Figure 6 and Figure 7, no statistics are mentioned in this section. There is only one notable addition here, and that is mentioning the fact that the government carried out 'brutal' trials (thô bạo) during this period. However, the book adds that the government quickly identified and changed the procedures of the trials. Thus despite some setbacks in the reform, the success of the reform outweighs its negative impacts. This book, as usual, did not mention events such as Nhân Văn Giai Phẩm or the Boat people.

Trong quá trình thực hiện cải cách ruộng đất, chúng ta đã phạm một số sai lầm như đầu tư quá nhiều địa chủ kháng chiến, những người thuộc tầng lớp trên có công với cách mạng; quy hoạch một số nông dân, cán bộ, bộ đội, đảng viên thân địa chủ.

Sai lầm trong cải cách ruộng đất được Đảng và Chính phủ phát hiện và có chủ trương, biện pháp sửa sai ngay khi kết thúc cải cách. Nhờ đó mà hậu quả được hạn chế và ý nghĩa của cải cách vẫn hết sức to lớn.

Sau cải cách ruộng đất, bộ mặt nông thôn miền Bắc đã thay đổi cơ bản, giai cấp địa chủ phong kiến bị đánh đổ, khối công nông lên nắm quyền lãnh đạo. Thắng lợi của cải cách ruộng đất góp phần tích cực thực hiện nhiệm vụ khôi phục kinh tế, hàn gắn vết thương chiến tranh.

Hãy trình bày quá trình thực hiện, kết quả và ý nghĩa của việc hoàn thành cải cách ruộng đất ở miền Bắc nước ta (1953 - 1957).

II - MIỀN BẮC HOÀN THÀNH CẢI CÁCH RUỘNG ĐẤT, KHÔI PHỤC KINH TẾ, CẢI TẠO QUAN HỆ SẢN XUẤT (1954 - 1960)

1. Hoàn thành cải cách ruộng đất

Qua 5 đợt cải cách ruộng đất (tiến hành từ cuối năm 1953 đến năm 1956), có khoảng 81 vạn hecta ruộng đất, 10 vạn trâu bò, 1,8 triệu nông cụ lấy tay gặt gặt đã chia cho hơn 2 triệu hộ nông dân. Khẩu hiệu "Người cày có ruộng" đã trở thành hiện thực. Giai cấp địa chủ phong kiến bị đánh đổ. Giai cấp nông dân được giải phóng, trở thành người chủ ở nông thôn.



Hình 58. Nông dân được chia ruộng trong cải cách ruộng đất.

Figure 9: The grade 9 student history book in 2014.

Within the history book (figure 9), land reform in 1952 is only mentioned on 1 page (pg. 129) out of 189 pages, an interesting decline in contrast to the upward trend in terms of length that was previously seen in Figures 6 to 8. The language and subject matter discussed is pretty positive, evidenced through sentences such as "The peasants are liberated..." (Giai cấp nông dân được giải phóng). The book again touches on the government's mistakes but fails to examine such errors in-depth.

và Chính phủ quyết định "Đẩy mạnh phát động quần chúng thực hiện cải cách ruộng đất".

Thực hiện chủ trương của Trung ương, trong hơn 2 năm (1954 - 1956) miền Bắc tiến hành tiếp đợt 6 giảm tô và 4 đợt cải cách ruộng đất ở 3.314 xã thuộc 22 tỉnh đồng bằng và trung du. Khẩu hiệu "người cày có ruộng" đã trở thành hiện thực.

Qua 5 đợt cải cách ruộng đất⁽¹⁾, đã tịch thu, trưng mua khoảng 81 vạn hecta ruộng đất, 10 vạn trâu bò và 1,8 triệu nông cụ lấy tay gặt gặt đã chia cho 2 triệu hộ nông dân.



Hình 58. Nông dân phân phối ruộng trong cải cách ruộng đất.

Trong cải cách ruộng đất, chúng ta cũng phạm một số sai lầm như đầu tư quá nhiều, thô bạo, đầu tư quá nhiều địa chủ kháng chiến, những người thuộc tầng lớp trên có công với cách mạng, quy hoạch một số nông dân, cán bộ, đảng viên thân địa chủ.

Figure 10: The grade 12 student history book in 2014.

In figure 10 that shows the grade 12 history book (2014), the land reform from 1955 to 1975 is discussed on only 1 page (pg.159) out of 220 pages. Moreover, this book adds nothing constructive to its 2000 counterpart, shown in Figure 8, mentioning the same events, the same positive benefits, and the same overall conclusion. Thus, despite the number of words and pages focusing on this topic fluctuating over the years, available content and decisions have remained majorly deficient and stagnant.

Discussion

Examining the national curriculum only provides part of the story of controversial historical events, especially in contrast to literature written about these sensitive topics. Moreover, no information about the NVGP event and the boat people immigration crisis was provided. The results indicate that the government has attempted to conceal elements of Vietnamese history. Furthermore, the survey results show that the government's attempt to hide these events has been quite successful. The survey shows that many people are unaware or know little about such critical historical events.

Since the sample was carried out on a relatively small scale, future studies could verify the representativeness of my sample by repeating the poll in a broader group of people from all regions, age groups, and social classes. The survey also has a potential limitation due to the politically controversial nature of the questions, which could incentivize respondents to answer dishonestly for their security. However, since the survey is kept completely anonymous, it minimizes the risk of invalid answers as it protects respondents.

Nevertheless, it could be said that Vietnamese history is so diverse and complicated. Within the span of the national curriculum, there are more influential events, such as the Vietnam war and Doi-moi, that needed to be prioritized to cover, leaving less space to discuss more complicated topics like the ones mentioned in this paper.

Further research is required to establish whether or not education is the most effective mechanism for political control and the effectiveness of such a method in the long run, especially with the advent of the internet as a new and prominent source of information.

■ Conclusion

Overall, 1986 marks the beginning of a new era of more open discussion, especially for Vietnamese historical education. The results of the paper demonstrated how from 1986 to 2014, there has been a gradual increase in the number of mentions and some accountability from the government of the infamous Land Reforms in 1956. Though many more sensitive events are still negated from the national curriculum, it shows that Doi Moi opened and widened Vietnamese historical education and allowed a better understanding of Vietnam's controversial past.

Assessing Vietnam's context at the time, the country was going through a state of political and economic instability. These events are inherently controversial. Though they were past events, their impacts had divided the country, causing chaos and hindering development. Therefore, it is clear that a strong nationalist sentiment and unity have significant political utility in a recovering post-colonial state. Realizing this, the Vietnamese history curriculum is changed to breed nationalism among the young. By cutting off controversial topics, the government was able to shape the nationalistic spirit of the young generation. This sense of loyalty and unity within the population has potentially contributed to the myriad of successes in the development process in Vietnam. Due to such achievements, it can be reasoned that the government has the incentive to continue to limit the discussion of such events to maintain the legitimacy of the government and to avoid fueling anti-establishment groups. Furthermore, actively engaging and promoting the shinier part of Vietnamese history helps to build more loyalty within the population and prevent more confrontational groups in the future.

This research provides new insights into education as one of the mechanisms that the government uses for establishing legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the public in Vietnam. By concealing parts of history, the government bolsters nationalism within its citizens while also decreasing the chances of rebellions and disorder by hiding events that may garner criticism.

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