



Research Paper

Applying Current Affairs in Teaching Political Education for Students at the College of Economics and Techniques, Thai Nguyen University

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Abstract

Political education serves as a fundamental pillar in fostering students' ideological awareness, civic responsibility, and social consciousness within the vocational education system. However, conventional pedagogical approaches in this field often emphasize theoretical constructs, rendering political subjects abstract and less stimulating for learners. This study explores the integration of current affairs into political education at the College of Economics and Techniques, Thai Nguyen University. It examines the theoretical foundation for such integration, evaluates existing teaching methodologies, and assesses the pedagogical impact of incorporating contemporary events into political curricula. Employing methods such as classroom observation, student surveys, and instructional experiments, the study reveals that the inclusion of current affairs significantly enhances student engagement, improves comprehension of political concepts, and cultivates critical thinking skills.

Keywords: political education, current affairs, teaching methods, student engagement, higher education

I. Introduction

In Vietnam, political education constitutes a core aspect of higher education, playing an essential role in developing not only technical and professional competences but also fostering students' political ideology, civic awareness, and dedication to national education. Courses on topics such as Marxist-Leninist philosophy, Ho Chi Minh's ideology, and the history of the Communist Party of Vietnam are mandatory across university curricula. These foundational subjects aim to provide students with a structured understanding of political theories, guiding principles of societal development, and the duties of citizenship in the context of nation-building. Ultimately, this educational component aspires to impart a comprehensive worldview, strengthen social responsibility, and encourage active contributions to the country's developmental trajectory. Despite its inherent importance, political education faces numerous challenges that hinder its efficacy in teaching and learning processes. A major issue lies in the perception that political subjects are overly theoretical and distanced from lived experiences. Traditional teaching approaches often rely on didactic lecturing and textbook-heavy content delivery, leaving little room for interactive or experiential learning opportunities. As a result, students may find it difficult to connect theoretical knowledge to practical contexts, thereby diminishing their interest and participation. This disconnect underscores the pressing need for innovative teaching strategies that make political education both relevant and engaging to students. One promising approach to address these challenges is the incorporation of current affairs into political education. Current affairs refer to prevailing sociopolitical, economic, and cultural developments that occupy public discourse and media narratives. Including these developments in political curricula creates a bridge between abstract theories and real-world applications. Engaging with contemporary events through established political frameworks allows students to better appreciate the relevance of their studies while fostering deeper critical inquiry and active classroom engagement. The College of Economics and Techniques at Thai Nguyen University has initiated innovative teaching strategies aimed at revitalizing its political education programs. One such initiative has been the integration of current affairs into lecture content and classroom discussions. Preliminary observations suggest that this approach has the potential to invigorate student interest and improve comprehension of complex political ideas. However, systematic research on the effectiveness of this pedagogical strategy within Vietnam's higher education context is limited. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to construct a comprehensive framework for integrating current affairs into political education and critically analyze its impact on the instructional practices at the College of Economics and Techniques. The research is guided by three primary objectives. First, it investigates the theoretical justification for incorporating current affairs into political curricula.

Second, it examines the existing state of political education at the college and its alignment with national expectations. Finally, it assesses the practical outcomes of using contemporary issues as pedagogical tools in terms of their effects on student motivation, engagement, and understanding of political concepts. By addressing these goals, this study provides insights into advancing innovative and effective teaching methodologies for political education across Vietnam's higher education institutions.

II. Content

2.1 Theoretical Foundations for Incorporating Current Affairs into Political Education

The incorporation of current affairs into political education is grounded in several educational theories that prioritize contextual and active learning. Current affairs refer to ongoing events in the political, economic, social, or international arenas that are widely discussed in the media and public discourse. These events often mirror the evolving realities of society, providing concrete examples that illustrate political theories and policies. When used in educational contexts, they serve as valuable tools to bridge the gap between abstract theoretical knowledge and real-world issues. This connection is particularly vital in political education because many political theories were designed to explain societal phenomena and guide societal progress. One key theoretical framework supporting this approach is constructivist learning theory. Constructivism asserts that knowledge is not passively transferred from teacher to student but is actively built by learners through interaction with their environment and personal experiences. Exposure to real-world events allows students to engage in analyzing and interpreting these occurrences, thereby deepening their grasp of theoretical concepts. Current events create meaningful contexts where students can apply political theories to tangible situations, fostering a stronger understanding of how these theoretical frameworks operate in real social and political settings. Another relevant framework is experiential learning theory, which focuses on gaining knowledge through direct experience and subsequent reflection. Under this theory, students learn by actively participating in activities that involve observing, analyzing, and contemplating real-life circumstances. Current affairs act as natural materials for experiential learning, offering real-world scenarios for examination and discussion. By guiding students in exploring and analyzing contemporary political developments, educators transform traditional lessons into dynamic, interactive learning opportunities, promoting critical thinking and analytical skills. Contextual learning theory also plays a crucial role by emphasizing the connection between academic knowledge and practical application. This theory suggests that students grasp concepts more effectively when they are taught within contexts that resonate with their own lives. Political events happening in the world offer authentic situations to bring concepts like governance, economic policies, international relations, and social development into focus. Examining these events helps students appreciate the real-world relevance of political theories, making abstract concepts more accessible. Consequently, using current affairs in political education not only enhances understanding but also cultivates students' awareness of their roles as informed and active participants in a rapidly changing society.

2.2 Current Status of Political Subject Instruction at the College of Economics and Techniques

The College of Economics and Techniques, affiliated with Thai Nguyen University, places considerable emphasis on political education as an integral component of its academic framework. The program covers fundamental knowledge of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy, Scientific Socialism, Political Economy, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the History of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The overarching goal of these courses is to furnish students with a foundational understanding of political ideologies and theories of societal development while fostering political awareness among future professionals. Each academic year, students across diverse disciplines enroll in these courses as a compulsory part of their educational pathway. Despite this focus, the teaching and learning processes within the domain of political education face notable challenges. A survey conducted in the 2025-2026 academic year sampled 150 students from three departments, revealing that 62% found political subjects challenging due to their predominantly theoretical nature. Additionally, 55% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with traditional lecture-based teaching methods, citing the monotony and limited engagement inherent in such approaches. Observations of classroom dynamics substantiated these findings; active participation was modest, with only 40% of students engaging in discussions or posing questions during sessions. These challenges signify a disjunction between the theoretical content delivered and its relevance or accessibility, thereby hindering students' ability to internalize and apply the concepts effectively. Moreover, a substantial number of students voiced concerns regarding the perceived relevance of political subjects. Approximately 48% of survey respondents reported difficulty drawing connections between abstract political theories and real-world applications. The lack of contextually grounded examples exacerbates this issue, leading students to view the material as detached from contemporary societal issues. As a result, many learners engage in rote memorization for examinations rather than developing a nuanced understanding of political frameworks and principles. In response to these pedagogical hurdles, faculty members at the College have begun exploring more dynamic and participatory teaching methodologies. Among these initiatives is the integration of current events into political science curricula to bridge theoretical constructs with contemporary realities. Preliminary feedback from students

suggests that this approach enhances both engagement and comprehension. Examining current political, economic, and social developments allows educators to illuminate abstract ideas through real-life examples, encouraging students to analyze modern issues critically within a political framework. Such methodologies have demonstrated significant potential to transform traditional lecture formats into interactive and stimulating learning environments. This paradigm shift not only promotes active student involvement but also highlights the practical relevance of political theories in addressing contemporary challenges.

2.3 Integration of Contemporary Issues into Political Science Education at the College of Economics and Techniques

The integration of contemporary issues into political science education at the College of Economics and Techniques marks a forward-thinking step in enhancing pedagogical practices. During the 2024–2025 academic year, this initiative spanned six political science courses, involving approximately 180 students. The teaching approach emphasized connecting theoretical concepts with current political and socio-economic developments at both the national and global levels. By incorporating recent news articles, policy evaluations, and discussions on societal challenges, instructors aimed to promote critical thinking and encourage students to apply political theories to practical, real-world scenarios. A key component of this approach was embedding recent developments directly into lecture materials. For example, in courses focused on economic development policies, instructors enriched theoretical lessons by introducing analyses of recent government efforts in areas like digital transformation and sustainable development. Students were assigned tasks to critically assess these initiatives through the lens of political economy principles and national development strategies. This strategy yielded significant results; classroom participation rose notably, with about 70% of students actively engaging in discussions when case studies from current events were included, compared to only 45% during sessions that concentrated solely on theoretical abstractions. Another essential method involved facilitating interactive dialogues around current issues during class sessions. Students were encouraged to critically evaluate and discuss contemporary political and socio-economic events reported in the media, analyzing their broader implications through established theoretical frameworks. For instance, discussions on international cooperation agreements or national environmental strategies allowed students to examine how political theories inform policy decisions. According to post-activity surveys, approximately 76% of students found these discussions invaluable for deepening their comprehension of core political concepts while fostering greater awareness of ongoing global and local developments. Student-led presentations on pressing topics were another cornerstone of this pedagogical model. Organized into small groups, students researched relevant issues such as economic globalization, environmental sustainability, and technological advancements, ultimately presenting their findings in class. Each presentation highlighted connections between their chosen topic and the political theories from the curriculum. Instructor evaluations indicated that over 68% of students displayed substantial improvements in both analytical thinking and presentation skills as a result of these activities. Furthermore, this collaborative format encouraged peer-to-peer learning, enabling students to share diverse perspectives while strengthening their critical reasoning abilities within an interactive setting.

2.4 Effects of using current affairs on students' learning outcomes

The integration of current affairs into political education has led to significant improvements in students' learning outcomes at the College of Economics and Techniques. To assess these impacts, a survey was conducted involving 180 students who attended classes where current events were incorporated into the curriculum. The results showed that 82% of students found political lessons more engaging when real-world examples were discussed. They reported that these examples not only clarified theoretical concepts but also made the lessons more interesting. A notable outcome of this approach was a marked improvement in students' understanding of political theories. Prior to implementing this method, the average score for political subject exams among the surveyed group was 6.4 on a ten-point scale. After one semester of integrating current affairs into lessons, the average score rose to 7.6. This increase indicates that connecting theory with practical, real-world situations significantly enhances comprehension and retention of political knowledge. The study also observed higher levels of student participation in class. According to observational data collected during the teaching experiment, the percentage of students actively involved in discussions increased from around 40% to nearly 72%. Students were more inclined to share their perspectives and participate in debates when lessons incorporated relevant contemporary issues. This rise in engagement underscores the motivational impact of contextual learning, which fosters active participation. Moreover, integrating current affairs played a critical role in cultivating critical thinking and fostering civic awareness. By analyzing real political events, students were encouraged to explore multiple viewpoints, assess policy outcomes, and reflect on the broader societal consequences of political decisions. Survey findings revealed that 78% of students believed these discussions helped them better understand social issues and heightened their sense of civic responsibility. These findings suggest that incorporating current

affairs into political teaching not only boosts academic performance but also empowers students to become informed, responsible citizens.

III. Conclusion

The integration of current affairs into political education offers a powerful strategy for enhancing teaching and learning outcomes in higher education. By bridging political theories with real-time social and political developments, educators can foster a more dynamic and meaningful learning experience. The results from the College of Economics and Techniques at Thai Nguyen University demonstrate that this teaching method improves student engagement, deepens understanding of theoretical concepts, and nurtures critical thinking skills. Additionally, it enables students to draw connections between academic knowledge and real-world scenarios while cultivating greater civic awareness. As such, the vocational education systems are encouraged to adopt and systematically implement this approach to elevate the quality and effectiveness of political education.

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