Applying Ho Chi Minh's Humanistic Educational Philosophy to Inclusive and Special Education: A Conceptual Framework

Thuan Quy Nguyen[1], Moc Giao Nguyen[2], ShiJian HONG[3]*, Phuoc Tai Nguyen[4]

[1] Faculty of Culture, Tourism and Social Work, Dong Thap, Vietnam; Email: ntquy@dthu.edu.vn

[2]Sen Hong Educational Skills Support Company Limited, Dong Thap, Vietnam; Email: nguyenmocgiao02@gmail.com

[3]School of Architecture and Civil Engineering, Xiamen University, Fujian, China; Email: hongshijian@xmu.edu.cn

[4] Can Tho University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Department of Basic Sciences, Can Tho, Vietnam; Email: nptai@ctump.edu.vn

** Corresponding author: ShiJian HONG*

HOW TO CITE:
Thuan Quy Nguyen, Moc Giao Nguyen, ShiJian HONG, Phuoc Tai Nguyen (2026). Applying Ho Chi Minh's Humanistic Educational Philosophy to Inclusive and Special Education: A Conceptual Framework. International Journal of Special Education, 41(3s), 761-768.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:
Copyright: © 2026 Authors. Open access publication underthe terms and conditions of the Creative CommonsAttribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

ABSTRACT:
This theoretical paper explores the relevance of Ho Chi Minh's humanistic educational philosophy to contemporary inclusive and special education. Drawing on philosophical and documentary analysis of primary and secondary sources, the article identifies three core dimensions of Ho Chi Minh's thought-dignity and equality of all learners, education for comprehensive human development, and the unity of learning and practice-and interprets them in light of current inclusive education discourses. Based on these dimensions, the paper proposes a conceptual framework for inclusive and special education that emphasizes respect for learner dignity, individualized support, and social participation, particularly for learners with disabilities. The framework is situated within global discussions on inclusive education and human rights, highlighting convergences and specific cultural contributions from a Vietnamese and Global South perspective. The article argues that Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy can enrich international debates by offering a historically grounded yet forward-looking vision of education that ensures no learner is left behind, regardless of disability or social background. As a purely theoretical contribution, this paper does not involve human participants, data collection, or clinical intervention, but instead provides a conceptual basis for future empirical studies on inclusive and special education informed by Ho Chi Minh's thought.

Keywords: Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy; humanism; inclusive education; special education; conceptual framework.

1. Introduction

Inclusive and special education have become central priorities in international education policy, particularly under the influence of human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and global commitments to "education for all" (UNESCO, 2015). In many countries, including Vietnam, inclusive education

is framed not only as a technical arrangement of services, but also as an ethical and philosophical commitment to justice, dignity, and social participation for learners with disabilities (Viet Nam News, 2026). Philosophical foundations thus play a crucial role in shaping how societies conceptualize inclusive and special education, influencing the aims of schooling, the role of teachers, and the status of learners who differ in ability, background, or circumstance (Le Cong Phuc, 2025).

Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy occupies a special place in Vietnam's intellectual history and has been widely recognized as a key foundation for national educational policies (Le Viet Tien, 2025). His thought is characterized as a genuine humanism that emphasizes the liberation of people from ignorance, the centrality of the learner, and the responsibility of education to form useful and humane citizens for an independent nation (Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025). Recent scholarship has underlined that Ho Chi Minh's humanistic thought remains relevant for contemporary educational reforms, especially where issues of equity, social justice, and human development are concerned (Le Cong Phuc, 2025; Nguyen Xuan The, 2022).

Despite this, there remains a lack of systematic work connecting Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy with the specific field of inclusive and special education, particularly in an international comparative perspective. Much of the existing literature addresses his educational thought in general terms, or focuses on broader questions of national development, youth education, and socialization of higher education, without explicitly considering learners with disabilities and the specialized supports they require (Le Viet Tien, 2025; Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025). This gap limits the contribution that a historically grounded, culturally specific educational philosophy might make to global debates on inclusive education.

The purpose of this paper is to address this gap by developing a conceptual framework that brings Ho Chi Minh's humanistic educational philosophy into dialogue with contemporary inclusive and special education theory. Specifically, the paper pursues three objectives: (a) to reconstruct core themes of Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy from a humanistic perspective; (b) to interpret these themes through the lens of inclusive and special education; and (c) to propose a conceptual model that can inform policy discourse, teacher education, and future empirical work in inclusive and special education.

The contribution of this paper is theoretical and philosophical rather than empirical. It is intended for an international audience of scholars and practitioners who seek to ground inclusive and special education not only in global policy frameworks, but also in diverse philosophical traditions beyond the dominant Western canon. By articulating Ho Chi Minh's humanistic educational philosophy as a resource for inclusive and special education, the paper offers a culturally rooted yet globally relevant perspective on how education systems can better serve all learners.

2. Methodology

2.1 Design

This study adopts a qualitative, theoretical design grounded in philosophical and documentary analysis. Rather than collecting empirical data from human participants, the research systematically interprets primary and secondary textual sources related to Ho Chi Minh's thought and to inclusive and special education. The article aligns with traditions in philosophy of education that seek to clarify concepts, reconstruct normative commitments, and propose frameworks for practice based on critical engagement with texts and ideas (Le Cong Phuc, 2025).

2.2 Sources and Data

The primary materials for this study include Ho Chi Minh's Complete Works (2011), spanning volumes 4 through 14, which contain his speeches, letters, directives, and writings on education, human development, and social justice. These materials highlight themes such as the fight against illiteracy, the moral and civic responsibilities of education, the importance of

learning with practice, and the centrality of the learner as subject (Ho Chi Minh, 2011). Secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed academic articles discussing Ho Chi Minh's humanism and educational philosophy in Vietnam, as well as contemporary developments in inclusive education and special education policy (Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025; Le Cong Phuc, 2025; Le Viet Tien, 2025; Nguyen Xuan The, 2022; Cam-Lien & Long, 2021; Ninh, 2023).

The study also engages with international scholarship on inclusive education, including works that interpret inclusion as a human rights project and examine the relationship between equity, diversity, and disability in schooling (UNESCO, 2015). These sources provide a comparative backdrop against which Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy can be interpreted and situated.

2.3 Analytical Approach

The analytical approach combines conceptual analysis with interpretive synthesis. First, key concepts in Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy-humanism, comprehensive education, and learning with practice-are identified and clarified through textual analysis of primary sources (Ho Chi Minh, 2011). Second, these concepts are examined in relation to core ideas in inclusive and special education, including learner dignity, universal access, individualized support, and social participation. Finally, the insights from this comparative analysis are synthesized into a conceptual framework articulating how Ho Chi Minh's humanistic educational philosophy can inform inclusive and special education theory and practice.

2.4 Research Ethics

As this is a purely theoretical study relying solely on publicly available texts, it does not involve human participants, human data, or any form of intervention. Consequently, ethical approval from an Institutional Review Board is not required.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study is a theoretical and documentary analysis based exclusively on published sources and does not involve human participants, human data, or any form of clinical intervention; therefore, ethical approval was not required in accordance with institutional and national guidelines for research ethics.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable; this study does not involve human participants or personal data.

3. Ho Chi Minh's Humanistic Educational Philosophy

3.1 Humanism and the Dignity of Learners

Ho Chi Minh's thought is characterized by a profound humanism that places the human being at the center of social and political life (Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025). This humanism is expressed through concrete concerns for the liberation of people from oppression, poverty, and ignorance, and for the creation of conditions in which each person can develop fully as a member of the community (Le Cong Phuc, 2025; Cam-Lien & Long, 2021). In the educational domain, this humanism is evident in his insistence that education must serve the people, respect the dignity of each learner, and ensure that opportunities for learning are extended to all, including those in the most marginalized circumstances. He declared: "An ignorant nation is a weak nation," framing the fight against illiteracy as both a moral and political imperative (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 4, p. 33; Le Cong Phuc, 2025).

Education is thus viewed not merely as the transmission of knowledge, but as a means of empowering individuals and communities to exercise their rights and responsibilities (Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025; Ninh, 2023). Ho Chi Minh consistently affirmed that "everyone can develop their full potential," and that the mission of education must serve all people-not a particular class, group, or elite (Le Cong Phuc, 2025). This emphasis on human dignity resonates strongly with contemporary inclusive education, which frames inclusion as a matter of recognizing the equal worth of all learners and ensuring that schools become communities where differences-such as disability-are valued rather than

stigmatized (UNESCO, 2015). Ho Chi Minh's humanistic insistence that no person should be left behind provides a moral foundation for efforts to include learners with disabilities in mainstream education.

3.2 Education for Comprehensive Human Development

Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy consistently stresses that education must aim at the comprehensive development of the human person (Nguyen Xuan The, 2022). This encompasses not only intellectual growth, but also moral, physical, aesthetic, and civic dimensions, reflecting a holistic view of what it means to be an educated human being. He required that the content of education "must focus on all aspects"-physical education, intellectual education, aesthetic education, and moral education-forming citizens who are both virtuous and competent (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 9, p. 386; Nguyen Xuan The, 2022).

Several studies confirm that, for Ho Chi Minh, education should nurture each learner's potential, recognize individual differences, and encourage continuous self-improvement throughout life (Le Cong Phuc, 2025; Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025). He emphasized the requirement of being "both virtuous and competent," in which moral character is the foundation of personality, while professional competence is essential for fulfilling assigned tasks (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 5, p. 269; Le Viet Tien, 2025; Cam-Lien & Long, 2021). The notion of comprehensive human development aligns closely with contemporary inclusive and special education, which calls for individualized educational plans, differentiated instruction, and a focus on the broader social and emotional development of learners with disabilities (Nguyen Xuan The, 2022; UNESCO, 2015).

3.3 Learning with Practice and Social Responsibility

Another hallmark of Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy is the principle that learning must be closely linked with practice. He emphasized that "theory without connection to practice is empty theory" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 6, p. 247; Le Viet Tien, 2025), and that education should connect theory with real-life experience, integrate school learning with productive labor, and encourage learners to apply knowledge in ways that serve the community and the nation (Le Cong Phuc, 2025; Ninh, 2023).

The principle of "learning with practice" also implies that education should occur in multiple environments-family, school, workplace, and community. Ho Chi Minh viewed the school–family–society relationship as three inseparable pillars in educating younger generations, asserting that "education in schools is only a part; there is also a need for education outside in society and in the family" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 7, p. 215; Le Viet Tien, 2025). This multi-contextual view is compatible with contemporary approaches emphasizing community-based learning, inclusive school environments, and partnerships between schools, families, and social services in supporting learners with disabilities (Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025).

4. Inclusive and Special Education: Contemporary Perspectives

4.1 From Integration to Inclusion

Internationally, the field of special education has undergone a shift from segregated models of provision toward integration and, more recently, inclusion. Integration typically refers to placing learners with disabilities in mainstream schools-often with limited adaptation of curriculum or pedagogy-whereas inclusion implies a deeper transformation of school culture, structures, and practices to accommodate diversity and ensure full participation (UNESCO, 2015). In Vietnam, policies increasingly emphasize inclusive education as a long-term goal, while special schools and resource centers continue to play varied roles in supporting learners with disabilities (Viet Nam News, 2026). The move toward inclusion is guided by principles of equity, non-discrimination, and respect for the rights of learners with disabilities (UNESCO, 2015). However, implementation remains uneven, and inclusive education faces challenges related to resources, teacher preparedness, societal attitudes,

and the complexity of learners' needs (Viet Nam News, 2026; Le Cong Phuc, 2025).

4.2 Human Rights, Humanism, and Disability

Contemporary inclusive education frameworks draw on human rights discourse, particularly the idea that education is a fundamental right and that learners with disabilities must not be excluded from general education systems (UNESCO, 2015). This rights-based approach overlaps with humanistic perspectives that emphasize the inherent dignity of all human beings (Nguyen Xuan The, 2022). Ho Chi Minh's emphasis on the equal dignity of all learners, the obligation to combat ignorance, and the necessity of ensuring that education serves the whole people aligns with the core commitments of inclusive education (Le Cong Phuc, 2025; Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025; Cam-Lien & Long, 2021). His historically grounded perspective adds nuances related to social solidarity, collective responsibility, and the importance of linking individual development with national and community goals.

4.3 Inclusive Education in Vietnam

In the Vietnamese context, inclusive education has been progressively integrated into national policy frameworks, with attention to the rights of children with disabilities and the need to develop more inclusive schools (Viet Nam News, 2026). Recent policy initiatives emphasize inclusive education as a consistent orientation of the Party and State, highlighting commitments to support learners with disabilities through specialized services, teacher training, and community-based programs (Viet Nam News, 2026; Le Viet Tien, 2025). However, practical challenges remain in rural and disadvantaged areas where resources and specialized personnel may be limited, and where attitudes toward disability can still be shaped by stigma or charity rather than rights and inclusion (Viet Nam News, 2026; Le Cong Phuc, 2025).

5. A Conceptual Framework for Inclusive and Special Education Based on Ho Chi Minh's Philosophy

Drawing on the preceding analysis, this section proposes a conceptual framework for inclusive and special education grounded in Ho Chi Minh's humanistic educational philosophy. The framework is organized around three interrelated pillars: (a) dignity and equality of all learners; (b) individualized support for comprehensive development; and (c) social participation and learning with practice.

5.1 Pillar 1: Dignity and Equality of All Learners

The first pillar centers on the recognition of the inherent dignity and equality of all learners, regardless of disability, social origin, or other differences. In Ho Chi Minh's thought, education is for the entire people, and any form of exclusion or marginalization undermines both human dignity and national development (Le Cong Phuc, 2025; Ninh, 2023). Applied to inclusive and special education, this pillar implies that:

- Schools must reject discriminatory practices that limit access to education for learners with disabilities.

- Educational policies should be explicitly oriented toward ensuring that no learner is left behind.

- Teachers and administrators must cultivate attitudes that respect learners with disabilities as full members of the school community.

This pillar provides the moral foundation for inclusive education by framing inclusion as a matter of justice and humanistic obligation rather than mere administrative reform (Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2015). It also encourages educators to move beyond deficit-based views toward more relational and contextual understandings of difference.

5.2 Pillar 2: Individualized Support for Comprehensive Development

The second pillar emphasizes individualized support designed to foster comprehensive human development. Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy highlights the need to nurture each person's potential and to treat learners as subjects with unique abilities and needs

(Nguyen Xuan The, 2022; Cam-Lien & Long, 2021). In the context of inclusive and special education, this translates into:

- Developing individualized educational plans that address academic, social, emotional, and physical dimensions of learning for students with disabilities.

- Adapting curriculum and pedagogy to accommodate diverse learning styles and communication needs.

- Providing specialized supports-such as assistive technologies, resource teachers, or therapeutic services-integrated with general education rather than segregated from it.

This pillar resists narrow conceptions of special education as remediation and frames it as an integral part of the broader project of human development envisioned by Ho Chi Minh (Nguyen Xuan The, 2022; Le Cong Phuc, 2025).

5.3 Pillar 3: Social Participation and Learning with Practice

The third pillar focuses on social participation and the integration of learning with practice. Ho Chi Minh's insistence that learning must be tied to practical action and community life suggests that inclusive and special education should aim not only at classroom inclusion, but also at meaningful participation in family, community, and work (Le Viet Tien, 2025; Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025). This pillar involves:

- Creating inclusive school cultures that encourage cooperative learning, peer support, and shared activities among learners with and without disabilities.

- Developing community-based learning experiences that allow learners with disabilities to apply their skills in vocational and civic contexts.

- Encouraging families, community organizations, and local authorities to collaborate with schools in supporting the social inclusion of learners with disabilities.

By emphasizing social participation, this pillar underscores that inclusive and special education should be oriented toward building more inclusive societies, not merely accommodating individuals within existing structures (UNESCO, 2015; Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025).

6. Implications for Policy, Teacher Education, and Research

6.1 Policy Implications

The proposed framework suggests several implications for educational policy. First, policy documents could more explicitly articulate the philosophical and humanistic foundations of inclusive and special education by referencing Ho Chi Minh's educational thought alongside international human rights instruments (Le Cong Phuc, 2025; Viet Nam News, 2026). Such articulation would help link national traditions with global commitments, reinforcing the legitimacy of inclusive education as both a domestic and international obligation (UNESCO, 2015).

Second, policies should encourage the development of inclusive school cultures by providing guidance on eliminating discriminatory practices, promoting universal design for learning, and strengthening collaboration between general and special education sectors. Embedding the three pillars-dignity and equality, individualized support, and social participation-into policy frameworks can help ensure that inclusion is understood as a comprehensive transformation rather than a limited program (Le Viet Tien, 2025; Viet Nam News, 2026).

6.2 Teacher Education and Professional Development

Teacher education programs have a crucial role in translating philosophical frameworks into practice. Integrating Ho Chi Minh's humanistic educational philosophy into teacher education curricula can support pre-service and in-service teachers in understanding inclusive and special education as moral and civic responsibilities, not only as technical tasks (Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025; Le Cong Phuc,

2025). Ho Chi Minh himself considered teaching "the noblest of noble professions, the most creative of creative professions," affirming that the exemplary role of teachers is central to any educational transformation (Ho Chi Minh, cited in Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025). Professional development initiatives should also emphasize practical strategies for implementing individualized support and fostering social participation in classrooms, including training on differentiated instruction, collaborative teaching, and community partnerships (Nguyen Xuan The, 2022; Le Cong Phuc, 2025).

6.3 Directions for Future Research

As a theoretical contribution, this paper lays the groundwork for empirical studies that examine how Ho Chi Minh's humanistic educational philosophy influences inclusive and special education practice. Future research could explore how teachers, school leaders, and policymakers in Vietnam and other contexts interpret and apply his thought in relation to learners with disabilities (Le Viet Tien, 2025; Le Cong Phuc, 2025). Qualitative case studies, action research, and comparative analyses could shed light on the opportunities and challenges of using this philosophical framework to guide inclusive education reforms. Such studies would require careful ethical consideration, including informed consent and protection of privacy, in accordance with international guidelines such as the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013) and the submission policies of journals like the International Journal of Special Education (International Journal of Special Education, 2024).

7. Conclusion

Ho Chi Minh's humanistic educational philosophy offers a rich and culturally grounded resource for rethinking inclusive and special education in Vietnam and beyond. By emphasizing the dignity and equality of all learners, comprehensive human development, and the integration of learning with practice, his thought aligns closely with contemporary inclusive education's commitments to equity, rights, and social participation for learners with disabilities (Le Cong Phuc, 2025; Nguyen Khanh Ly et al., 2025; Nguyen Xuan The, 2022). At the same time, his historically situated perspective-shaped by struggles for national independence and social justice-adds distinctive nuances that can broaden global debates on inclusion and special education.

The conceptual framework proposed in this paper-centered on the pillars of dignity and equality, individualized support, and social participation-provides a theoretical lens through which policymakers, educators, and researchers can interpret and develop inclusive and special education practices (UNESCO, 2015; Le Viet Tien, 2025). While the framework does not offer detailed prescriptions, it establishes a humanistic orientation that can guide context-sensitive and ethically grounded decisions in diverse educational settings.

By articulating the connections between Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy and inclusive and special education, this article also suggests that philosophical traditions from the Global South can make significant contributions to international discussions on educational justice. Future empirical research is needed to explore how this framework can be operationalized in schools, teacher education, and community programs. In this way, Ho Chi Minh's humanistic educational philosophy can continue to inspire efforts to build education systems that truly leave no learner behind (Le Cong Phuc, 2025; Viet Nam News, 2026).

References

Cam-Lien, N. T., & Long, C. X. (2021). Ho Chi Minh's educational ideology and its meaning in education innovation in Vietnam today. *Revista de Investigaciones Universidad del Quindío, 33*(1), 214–220. https://doi.org/10.33975/riuq.vol33n1.560

Ho Chi Minh. (2011). *Ho Chi Minh complete works* (Vols. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14). National Political Publishing House – Truth. [Original documents compiled 1945–1969; this critical edition 2011]

Le Cong Phuc. (2025). Promoting the role of Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy in the current renovation of education and training in Vietnam. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research, 11*(4), 1–4. https://www.socialsciencejournal.in/assets/archives/2025/vol11issue4/11067.pdf

Le Viet Tien. (2025). Ho Chi Minh's educational thought and its relevance to the socialization of higher education in Vietnam today. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research, 8*(12), 9355–9360. https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v8-i12-21

Nguyen Khanh Ly, Ho Thi Trinh, & Nguyen Chi Hai. (2025). Applying Ho Chi Minh's thought on education in the renovation period in Vietnam today. *European Journal of Social Sciences Studies, 11*(1), 132–141. https://doi.org/10.46827/ejsss.v11i1.1953

Nguyen Xuan The. (2022). Comprehensive human education: From the perspective of Ho Chi Minh. *International Journal of Health Sciences, 6*(S1), 2927–2936. https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS1.5377

Ninh, N. D. (2023). Ho Chi Minh's ideology on education: Content and meaning. *Linguistics and Culture Review, 7*(1), 78–87. http://dx.doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v7n1.2262

UNESCO. (2015). *Rethinking education: Towards a global common good?* UNESCO Publishing. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232555

Viet Nam News. (2026, January 28). New policy to enhance inclusive education for students with disabilities. *Viet Nam News.* https://vietnamnews.vn/society/1764774/new-policy-to-enhance-inclusive-education-for-students-with-disabilities.html

World Medical Association. (2013). World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects. *World Medical Association.* https://www.wma.net/what-we-do/medical-ethics/declaration-of-helsinki