



Thu Dau Mot University  
Journal of Science

ISSN 2615 - 9635

journal homepage: [ejs.tdmu.edu.vn](http://ejs.tdmu.edu.vn)



## **Organization and development of general education in the all-people, all-out war in Cho Lon Province 1945-1954 - historical approach through oral narratives**

by **Pham Van Thinh** (Thu Dau Mot University)

**Article Info:** Received April 9th, 2022, Accepted May 30th, 2022, Available online June 15th, 2022

Corresponding author: [thinhpv@tdmu.edu.vn](mailto:thinhpv@tdmu.edu.vn)

<https://doi.org/10.37550/tdmu.EJS/2022.02.289>

### **ABSTRACT**

*Cho Lon was a former province in southern Vietnam, now part of Ho Chi Minh City and Long An Province. During the Vietnam War from 1945 to 1954, Cho Lon province exemplified the practice of an all-people, all-out war across military, political, economic, and cultural fields. Using the method of writing history through oral narratives, this paper presents the process of organizing and developing general education in Cho Lon province in conjunction with the resistance movement led by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The results show that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Cho Lon province organized and developed general education throughout the resistance, even during the most intense periods of the war. The development of general education in Cho Lon province became an integral part of the resistance, contributing to its momentum and strength, and helping to achieve victory in the fight against French colonial invasion. The educational development in Cho Lon province from 1945 to 1954 provides valuable lessons for building an educational system during wartime.*

**Keywords:** *general education, schools, wartime*

### **1. Introduction**

On September 2, 1945, Vietnam declared independence after more than 80 years as a French colony, leading to the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. However, shortly after, French troops returned and began the second war of aggression against

Vietnam. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam organized the people to resist French colonial forces to protect national independence. This resistance lasted nine years, culminating in 1954 with the defeat of French forces and an agreement recognizing Vietnam's independence signed in Geneva, Switzerland. During this resistance, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam established a comprehensive, self-reliant people's war strategy, in which the organization and development of education were identified as integral to the resistance effort (HCMVCP, 2000; Tran Hai Phung and Luu Phuong Thanh, 1994). Studying the organization and development of education is significant, helping to clarify the history of the all-people, all-out resistance against colonial invaders and providing scientific arguments for organizing and developing education during wartime. Researching educational activities in wartime also helps to evaluate the tradition of valuing education and the innovations in educational development in a local context during wartime.

## **2. Documents and Methods**

To date, research on Vietnamese education during wartime from 1945-1975 in general, and the period from 1945-1954 in particular, remains underexplored and has not received adequate academic attention. The few publications on this topic are mostly general and suggestive, outlining research directions. Notable publications on the history of Vietnamese education, such as Tran Hong Quan (et al., 1995), Le Van Giang (et al., 1995), Vo Thuan Nho (1980), have only provided general information on the context, policies, and development strategies of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's wartime education. The most extensive work on this topic is Huynh Tan Phat's (2004) publication, which discusses the Communist Party of Vietnam's policies on the development of people's democratic education in the South during 1954-1975. However, specific educational activities are only discussed with some basic data on regional scales like Southeast, Southwest, and Central South regions. The organization and activities of individual localities have yet to be thoroughly researched.

To study this topic, this paper uses the method of writing the history of education combined with the method of writing history through oral narratives. The educational history approach involves selecting significant events, arranging them chronologically, and establishing relationships between events and the historical context (Gary McCulloch, 2016). In wartime conditions, written materials related to the organization and activities of education are scarce and often lost or scattered. Therefore, the method of writing history through oral narratives is employed as a key method to reconstruct history. This method synthesizes historical data through interviews, often recorded and sometimes videotaped, with participants or observers of significant events or periods (Stephen Caunce, 1994). Ten historical witnesses, including teachers and officials from various sectors, participated in recorded and transcribed interviews conducted in 2008, 2009, and 2012. The data collection process was clearly defined with steps: 1) Constructing a questionnaire or focal issues; 2) Planning the use of interview data;

3) Establishing interview focus; 4) Conducting interviews; 5) Processing interviews; 6) Evaluating research, repeating interviews for some cases; 7) Organizing and presenting results; 8) Organizing a conference to compare interview data. The information collected from these retrospective interviews provided data on local policies, teachers, learners, schools, classes, and important events in local educational activities.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### ***3.1. The popular literacy campaign and the eradication of illiteracy in Cho Lon (1945-1946)***

With the success of the August Revolution in 1945, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam promptly initiated efforts to eradicate illiteracy and implement educational development policies. Only one day after the Declaration of Independence was announced, during the first Government Council meeting (September 3, 1945), leader Ho Chi Minh stated: "Illiteracy is one of the insidious methods the colonists use to rule us. Over 90% of our people are illiterate. Yet in just three months, they can learn to read and write in our language. An illiterate nation is a weak nation. Therefore, I propose launching a campaign against illiteracy" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011). Following Ho Chi Minh's proposal, on September 8, 1945, the Government issued three decrees to combat illiteracy and gradually develop education: 1) Decree No. 17/SL established the Department of Popular Education, specifically responsible for public education. 2) Decree No. 19/SL mandated the organization of evening literacy classes for farmers and workers, requiring that within six months, every village and town must have a class with at least 30 students. 3) Decree No. 20/SL stipulated that learning the national script was mandatory and free for everyone, with the goal that within one year, all Vietnamese citizens over the age of 8 would be able to read and write in the national script (Tran Hong Quan et al., 1995).

In Cho Lon province, following the independence celebration on September 2, 1945, the revolutionary government was established. The Southern Administrative Committee appointed Mr. Vo Loi Trinh, a leader of the Tien Phong Youth, as Chairman. Nguyen Van Hoanh, Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee, concurrently served as Vice Chairman. Districts and villages also sequentially established Administrative Committees to manage all aspects of life. In coordination with the government at various levels, the provisional Viet Minh system from province to district and village, along with associations like Farmers, Women, and Youth, were consolidated and strengthened. The Viet Minh Village Committee, a grassroots organization of the Viet Minh Front, was widely established and played a crucial role in mobilizing forces and implementing the Party's and Government's policies at the local level (Ho Huu Nhut et al., 2002).

In the field of education, the Cho Lon Administrative Committee and the Provincial Viet Minh Committee launched the popular literacy campaign across all townships and villages. The Propaganda Department of the Provincial People's Committee, in collaboration with

the Provincial Viet Minh Committee, gathered patriotic teachers in Cho Lon, such as Nguyen Van Truyen, Nguyen Van Muoi (from Duc Hoa Dong village); Huynh Ngoc Tu, Nguyen Van Lua, Nguyen Van Nhung, Ho Van Thu (from Huu Thanh village), and several teachers who had previously taught in Saigon, like Viet Tu and Tan Long, to form the Popular Literacy Support Committee. Teachers in the Support Committee acted as propagandists, guides, and direct instructors in the initial literacy classes in the province (Phan Xuan Bien et al., 2005). Within a short period, the literacy campaign spread widely across localities. Propaganda officers from the provincial to district and village levels coordinated with various organizations to mobilize people to participate in reading and writing classes under the motto "those who know teach those who don't." Those who couldn't read or write engaged in promotional activities.

The anti-illiteracy movement spread throughout hamlets and villages. Wherever there were people needing education, a class was established. Students ranged from young to old, male and female, with women being the most numerous in the classes. Many elderly people aged 60-70 enthusiastically attended "Uncle Ho's" literacy classes along with young children. At the end of November 1945, the Cho Lon Provincial Party Committee organized a teacher training course for popular education in Rach Rit (Tan Buu village - Central District, now Ben Luc district) with nearly 100 trainees. After over a month of study in Rach Rit, learning valuable guidance and experiences in organizing and teaching literacy classes, all trainees eagerly returned to fulfill their duties in their localities (Phan Van Nhan, 2008).

Following the training in Rach Rit, the literacy campaign in Cho Lon was organized in a "spreading oil slick" manner. Classes were set up everywhere, in private homes, temples, and pagodas, with just a few bamboo beds, wooden planks, and a door or a plain board serving as a classroom. Without paper and pens, teachers and students used charcoal and white lime to write; without oil lamps, they burned wood and torches for light (Le Van Chi, 2008). Meetings organized by patriotic associations also became learning sessions. People worked in the fields by day and called each other to class in the evenings, filling the hamlets with the sounds of learning:

*“I and T have hooks on both  
Short I has a dot, long T has a line  
O is round like a chicken egg  
Ô wears a hat, O has a beard  
U and U are alike  
U has a hook on top  
E, Ê, and L are of the same kind  
Ê wears a hat, L is longer”* (Pham Thanh Phong, 2009)

To encourage literacy, some places erected "illiteracy gates" at the entrance to markets, bridges, and along canals. Everyone passing through had to try reading the letters; those who could read were allowed to pass, while those who couldn't had to "crawl through the

illiteracy gate" to enter the market or go to work (Nguyen Duy Minh, 2008).

After a month of the campaign, literacy became a regular daily activity for the people. Some learned to read and write within a few weeks. Some villagers even wrote letters to President Ho Chi Minh, expressing their joy at learning to read and write thanks to the revolution and Uncle Ho. The image of elderly and young heads huddled together under oil lamps, practicing reading and spelling, created a beautiful scene reflecting the optimistic and hopeful atmosphere among the people of Cho Lon in the early days of independence. In late October 1945, French forces broke through the outskirts of Saigon, advancing towards the western provinces of the Mekong Delta. On the night of October 22, 1945, French forces breached the Cho Dem defensive line, advancing to Go Den. The Liberation Army of Long Hung Ha fought the French along the Dong Duong road (now National Highway 1) with primitive weapons (firearms and spears) but couldn't stop the enemy's advance. By the end of October 1945, French forces occupied Ben Luc market and controlled the Dong Duong road. The Cho Lon People's Committee, now renamed the Resistance Administrative Committee, withdrew to the Vuon Thom - Ba Vu base. The immediate priority was to intensify propaganda, mobilize the people for political struggle, implement a "scorched earth" policy, refuse cooperation with the enemy, and call on youth to join the "army" (HCMCVCP, 2000).

Due to the war, the literacy campaign had to be temporarily halted to focus on resistance activities. However, at the cadre training classes organized by the Cho Lon Resistance Administrative Committee in Huu Thanh Ha and Luong Hoa (November 1945), provincial leaders emphasized that alongside fighting hunger and foreign invaders, combating illiteracy remained a key task of the revolutionary government. By December 1945, French forces had occupied most towns and district headquarters, controlling major transportation routes. Despite this, the armed resistance movement among the people of Cho Lon continued throughout Can Duoc, Can Giuoc, Central District, and Duc Hoa. Concentrated armed forces of districts, townships, and villages were formed, named after localities or commanders, such as "Red Hong Son Army" in Can Duoc, "Truong Van Bang Liberation Army" in Can Giuoc, "Huynh Van Mot Army" (also known as Duc Hoa Self-Defense Combat Army), "Tu Bon Army" in Central District, and "Long Hung Ha Liberation Army" also in Central District (Le Van Dat, 2011).

On December 10, 1945, the Southern Regional Committee meeting in Duc Hoa decided to divide the Southern Region into three zones: Zone 7, Zone 8, and Zone 9. Cho Lon province belonged to Zone 7. At this meeting, the Regional Committee instructed provinces to merge military, civil, administrative, and party organizations. The Viet Minh Front became the highest leading body, responsible for consolidating local governments and mass organizations<sup>1</sup>. In December 1945, the military-civil-administrative-party bodies in Cho Lon urgently prepared for the upcoming National Assembly elections. After the successful general election (January 6, 1946), the Cho Lon Provincial Party Committee and Resistance

Administrative Committee held a conference at Ly Van Manh canal (Vuon Thom - Ba Vu area) in February 1946. The conference affirmed the urgent task of strengthening local governments, mass organizations, and the Viet Minh Front, intensifying propaganda to mobilize the masses, building armed resistance forces, and continuing the literacy campaign (Nguyen Thanh Long, 2012).

Immediately after the conference, the literacy campaign was revived. In areas under our control, the Viet Minh Front and patriotic associations combined resistance propaganda with calls for people to join the literacy campaign. Slogans included: "Learning is resistance," "Each literacy class is a propaganda unit for resistance," "Each literacy teacher is a resistance propagandist," "Supporting literacy is patriotic"... In literacy classes, teachers taught both literacy and current affairs, government policies, and patriotic songs like "Marching Song," "Vietnamese Liberation Army March," "Resounding Rivers"...

From mid-1946, in areas under our control such as Tan Buu, An Thanh (Trung Quan), Huu Thanh, Hoa Khanh, An Ninh, Loc Giang, Tan My (Duc Hoa), Long Dinh, Phuoc Van, Long Cang, Long Son (Can Duoc), Phuoc Ly, Phuoc Hau, My Loc, Phuoc Lam, Phuoc Vinh Dong (Can Giuoc), home-based classes spread across the villages. Many officials from various levels of the Administrative Resistance Committees and organizations within the Viet Minh Front, after attending training courses organized by the province, returned to their localities. Besides their main duties, they participated in organizing short-term pedagogy classes, attending classes, teaching practice sessions, and assisting teachers with professional skills and methods of mobilizing the mass literacy movement. Propaganda books and newspapers from the Cho Lon Provincial Viet Minh Committee were widely distributed and used in literacy classes.

In the last months of 1946, the French army conducted several sweeps into base areas, establishing and consolidating the village administration machinery. The literacy movement faced many difficulties but tried to maintain itself, especially home-based classes. The provincial and district patriotic organizations (Patriotic Women's Union, Patriotic Farmers' Association, Patriotic Youth Union) actively mobilized members to lead propaganda, encouraging people to participate in the resistance and setting an example in the literacy movement (Nguyen Van Kien, 2009, 2012). On December 19, 1946, the nationwide resistance war broke out. Some literacy movement officials joined armed units and civil-administrative-party organizations,... The French colonialist stranglehold tightened, forcing the literacy movement to temporarily cease activities.

### ***3.2. Impact and significance of the popular literacy campaign in Cho Lon (1945-1946)***

From the end of 1946, in the Southern Region, the French colonialists used every trick to entice and gather various factions and reactionary groups disguised as religious entities into a fake "national front," while vigorously building "national zones" and "security zones" to divide and isolate the resistance forces. Additionally, the French developed puppet troops, rearranged the battlefield, and concentrated forces to launch major operations into resistance

base areas, aiming to destroy armed forces and revolutionary bases (Pham Thanh Phong, 2009). In Cho Lon province, the French established numerous outposts along the Vam Co Dong River and key transportation routes. Around the base areas of Vuon Thom – Ba Vu (Trung Quan), An Ninh, Loc Giang (Duc Hoa), Long Cang, Long Son (Can Duoc)..., they reinforced elite units to control, monitor, and destroy the resistance bases.

Despite new tactics by the French army, in response to President Ho Chi Minh's call for *National resistance* (December 19, 1946), the resistance against the French colonialists in Cho Lon province increasingly demonstrated its all-people, comprehensive nature. At the end of December 1946, the Cho Lon Provincial Information and Propaganda Department was established (headed by Mr. Quach Van Tuan, with Mr. Nguyen Van Mui in charge of training). The department undertook the propaganda, training, and educational tasks of both the Party Committee and the resistance government in the province.

In early 1947, the Provincial and District Committees for Supporting Literacy were reinforced with additional personnel, closely linked to the resistance propaganda activities. The educational content was improved to simultaneously teach literacy and promote propaganda (resistance phonics, resistance reading practice). Many literacy students were soldiers, guerrillas, police, district and village government officials, and members of patriotic organizations. Classes were organized flexibly in canals, groves, houses, and there were sessions in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Teachers included discussions on the resistance line and tasks, and activities promoted by the Viet Minh Front and patriotic organizations, such as "rice jar for soldiers," "resistance chicken," and "winter coat for soldiers." In addition to familiar slogans like "Every class is a propaganda unit for resistance," "Every literacy teacher is a resistance propagandist," "Learning is resistance," new slogans emerged: "Fight while learning," "Education for resistance victory," "Frontline fights invaders, rear eradicates illiteracy" (Rum Bao Viet, 2008; Nguyen Van Ky, 2012).

In August 1947, the Southern Administrative Resistance Committee established the Southern Education Department. Subsequently, provinces established Education Departments; at the district level, there were Education Offices, and at the commune level, there were Literacy and Cultural Committees under the Administrative Resistance Committees.

In Cho Lon, the Education Department was established in August 1947, led by teacher Long (Tan Long) as Director and teacher Viet (Viet Tu) as Deputy Director. The first headquarters of the Cho Lon Provincial Education Department was located in Huu Thanh village (Duc Hoa district). This area hosted many civil-administrative-party organizations of Cho Lon province, as well as resistance agencies from Saigon and Gia Dinh province. Under the professional guidance of the Education Department, military units, guerrillas, and civil-administrative-party organizations in Cho Lon actively promoted the literacy movement to eradicate illiteracy. From the end of 1947, along the Vam Co Dong River, many simple classes were set up for officials, soldiers, and people. Outside of working hours, many

officials from agencies and organizations became part-time teachers, spreading across villages to teach literacy and culture to the people. Some military units organized their own classes, with unit officials serving as teachers. The Cho Lon Education Department compiled teaching materials (spelling practice books, reading practice books, arithmetic books) and provided them to agencies, units, localities, and supported teachers where needed (Le Nghiem, 2002).

From 1948, following the "De la Tour" plan, the French established a dense system of outposts and watchtowers and conducted large-scale sweeps into resistance base areas. In February 1948, with modern weapons and equipment, thousands of French troops invaded the Vuon Thom - Ba Vu area (Trung Quan), burning houses and killing people. The resistance forces stationed here fought bravely, repelling the French sweep, inflicting heavy casualties, and capturing many weapons and supplies.

After the battle, to ensure secrecy and safety, the Cho Lon Provincial Party Committee and civil-military organizations moved their base to the Song Xoai area (Thuan Nghia Hoa) - Thuy Dong, along the Vam Co Tay River (Moc Hoa district, Tan An province). Despite the relocation, provincial departments continued their activities. The Cho Lon Education Department divided its personnel into two groups. One group remained in areas with strong guerrilla movements, organizing literacy classes for remaining officials, soldiers, and guerrillas, while also mobilizing people to support the resistance. The other group focused on building infrastructure and preparing conditions in the Dong Thap Muoi base area for establishing a provincial resistance elementary school (Le Thanh Chau, 2012).

In late February 1948, the Provincial Party Committee and the Administration Committee of Cho Lon Province decided to establish the first centralized primary school of the province, named Ho Van Gang School. This decision aimed to meet the demand for training personnel in various fields and levels at the local level (especially for military units, labor workshops), as well as to provide students for further education at Thai Van Lung Resistance High School and Nguyen Van To High School (these are high schools managed by Zone 9). Ho Van Gang Primary School was located in Xeo San stream, Thanh Hoa commune (Moc Hoa district), near Nguyen Van Dinh Primary School in Tan An province. The principal was teacher Tan Long (Principal of Cho Lon Education Department), the vice principal was teacher Viet (Vice Principal of Cho Lon Education Department). The teaching staff included teachers Yen Lang, Tam, Nghi, and Mrs. Hue, etc. In the early days of its establishment, the school only had 2 classes (one for Year 5 and one for Year 4), with about 20 students per class. Both teachers and students worked together to dig the ground, lay the foundation, cut timber for beams, split bamboo for roofing, and build walls. Two simple houses were built by teachers and students to serve as both classrooms and living quarters. Desks, beds, and household tools were all made from local materials in Dong Thap Muoi (ironwood, bamboo, etc.). There were only a few scattered houses around the school, along with a few small stalls selling tea, banh tet, banh u, bananas, etc. (Le Thi Giot, 2012).



In the context of war, the school was organized militarily. All teachers and students were organized into a school unit, with a unit commander and two deputy commanders appointed by the School Board. Each class was a platoon, with a platoon leader and deputy leader. Each platoon was further divided into 3 squads, each with a squad leader and assistant squad leader. Both teachers and students had simple, lightweight gear. Each person only had a small box for sleeping and a bag made of bamboo to hold clothes and books. To sustain the school's activities, in addition to mobilizing food from the local people, some provisions were contributed from the temporarily occupied areas. All teachers and students directly participated in labor and organized daily life. Teachers and students lived together like a large family, with teachers as parents and students as siblings. Older students took on more responsibilities. On days off, both teachers and students went out to collect firewood, plant vegetables, collect honey, catch fish, etc., to improve their livelihoods. Despite many shortages and hardships, the students' enthusiasm for learning was high. Ho Van Gang Primary School was a focal point in the educational efforts of Cho Lon province in the early years of the resistance against the French (Nguyen Van Diep, 2012).

In mid-1948, under the directive of the Southern Regional Party Committee, the Cho Lon Provincial Party Committee established the Provincial Propaganda Committee with Mr. Nguyen Van Mui (Sau Duong) as its head. The personnel of the Provincial Propaganda Committee were mainly drawn from the Information and Propaganda Department and the Education Department. With direct guidance from the Provincial Propaganda Committee, the coordination and support in propaganda, education, culture, and arts activities in Cho Lon province improved day by day (Nguyen Van Kien, 2009).

The focus of education work at this time was actively developing the teaching staff. In 1948, the Cho Lon Education Department mobilized dozens of skilled teachers with patriotic spirit from the occupied areas to the volunteer base areas to participate in teaching. With the rapid increase in the teaching staff, grassroots education and literacy eradication made new progress. In Tan Phu, Hoa Khanh, Huu Thanh communes (Duc Hoa district), there were one or two grassroots education classes in every commune. In addition to specialized teachers, most of the propaganda and information officers also participated in teaching. Teachers Nguyen Van Truyen, Nguyen Van Muoi, Truong Van Y (working at the Information and Propaganda Department of Duc Hoa district) each managed a grassroots education class. In Can Duoc district, the grassroots education movement developed strongly in Tan Lan, Long Cang, Long Dinh, Long Son communes. In Phuoc Vinh Dong, Phuoc Lai, Phuoc Ly communes (Can Giuoc district), each commune opened from 3 to 4 grassroots education classes at people's homes (Nguyen Van Kien, 2012).

At the Vuon Thom - Ba Vu base area, the grassroots education movement flourished in Tan Buu, Luong Hoa, An Thanh communes, closely linked with the "patriotic emulation" and "new life" building movements. Grassroots teachers cooperated with propaganda and information officers to both teach and mobilize families in the base areas to implement new

lifestyles such as cooking food thoroughly, boiling water for drinking, using double-ended chopsticks for meals, etc. Traditional customs such as weddings, funerals were simplified, practical, and economical. The "rice jar to support the troops," "fighting chicken" movements launched by the Viet Minh became learning content in grassroots education classes. Many folk songs and chants encouraging the spirit of learning were widely disseminated in the base areas:

*"Oh, cheeks so rosy and bright,  
Husband complains just because of illiteracy's blight."*

*"That lad, so charming, so fine,  
Illiteracy makes his words decline."*

*"Like a cat chasing after a fish,  
Thoughtless words, no forethought, just a wish."*

*"Dear sir, don't dream so bold,*

*Who's illiterate, dare you praise or scold."* (Truong Thi Kim Tien, 2012).

In 1949, through a combination of resistance and disruption, the people of Cho Lon gradually loosened the grip of the French forces. In the Vuon Thom - Ba Vu base and the upper areas of Can Duoc and Can Giuoc, provincial and district armed forces cooperated to launch swift attacks on French outposts, while guerrilla fighters ambushed these outposts and intimidated collaborators, causing the French forces to only dare operate during the day; in some areas, we gained control. The liberated zone extended from Vuon Thom - Ba Vu to Luong Hoa, Huu Thanh (Tran Hai Phung, Luu Phuong Thanh, 1994).

The grassroots education movement and cultural supplementation in the base areas of Cho Lon province took on more flexible organizational forms. Right within the Vuon Thom - Ba Vu base, the Education Department instructed the opening of pre-basic grassroots classes (equivalent to grade 2) for commune officials, patriotic organizations, and armed units. Civil, military, and party organs, as well as military units, guerrilla groups, and labor workshops, organized cultural supplementation classes according to their units and territories. The education content was practical, specific, and tailored to the requirements and tasks at hand. Financial officers learned arithmetic for tax collection, while propaganda officers learned political knowledge... In Duc Hoa district, communes such as Huu Thanh, Hoa Khanh, and Tan Phu opened primary classes for the administrative resistance officials and the various organs and organizations of the communes. Regiment 308 opened grassroots primary classes for soldiers. With just a few students, classes could be started; many soldiers studied culture immediately after battles, after French attacks (Nguyen Van Kien, 2012).

From mid-1949 onwards, the resistance in Cho Lon entered a more challenging phase. The French erected numerous outposts and watchtowers everywhere. The standing base of the province in Dong Thap Muoi was frequently swept (sometimes just 1-2 months after French sweeps, the destruction became increasingly severe). In November 1949, the French mobilized large forces to sweep into the Vuon Thom - Ba Vu base, occupying some areas and

registering residents, issuing travel permits to control the population in the occupied area.

Faced with this situation, the Provincial Party Committee, the Administrative Resistance Committee, and the military-civilian organs of Cho Lon Province had to relocate to Ma Reng, Mop Xanh, Giong Dinh, and Giong Luc (now part of Binh Thanh, My Quy Dong, My Quy Tay, My Thanh Bac communes - Duc Hue district). This was a vast swampy area interspersed with high mounds of land, sparsely populated, with difficult production and living conditions. Provincial organs - including the Education Department - had to continuously change locations, build new headquarters and camps to operate... Ho Van Gang Primary School also had to evacuate to many places. From Xeo San, the school moved to Tan Thiet and then to Tan Lap, each place only hosting for a few months before having to move again (Nguyen Thanh Long, 2012).

In the temporarily occupied areas, the French sought to restore old schools and establish "Educational Youth Organizations" to implement their assimilationist education policy. In response to the French's sinister schemes, we arranged, connected some revolutionary teachers to participate in teaching immediately in schools controlled by the French, trying to incorporate revolutionary and resistance content when delivering lessons to students. Besides, home study classes were also opened in the temporarily occupied areas to help people understand the policies of the resistance government. Guard posts were set up for the classes; whenever there was an alarm, documents were quickly hidden in bamboo tubes or rice bags; students dispersed to nearby houses or fields to avoid the surveillance and terror of the French.

At the beginning of 1950, the French continued to establish more outposts deep into the base area, regularly organizing sweeps, looting the property of the people. In the occupied areas, the French conducted many raids, arrests, and killings of revolutionary cadres and those participating in the resistance. The losses of cadres and party members were increasing. The activities of the Administrative Resistance Committee and the departments became more difficult and dangerous.

Faced with the new schemes and tactics of the French, in February 1950, the Cho Lon Provincial Party Committee held a conference in My An commune (Cai Be district, My Tho province) to elect a new Provincial Party Committee, with Nguyen Manh Hoan as Secretary. Regarding education work, the conference directed the strengthening of the combination of cultural and political education, increasing the teaching staff for cultural supplementation, and expanding the forms of home study classes (Phan Xuan Bien et al., 2005).

Immediately after the Provincial Party Committee conference, the Education Department rearranged the teaching staff, organized them according to the structure of the people-civilian-party organs to organize cultural education for officials. In the second half of 1950, political classes combined with cultural supplementation were opened in Bau Voi (My Quy Tay), Binh Hoa (East City area), Long Hoa (Can Duoc), Tan Thiet, Phong Phu - Thanh Hoa commune (now Binh Phong Thanh commune, Moc Hoa district). Hundreds of students - mostly administrative resistance officials from district and commune levels and various

patriotic organizations - participated in these political classes combined with cultural supplementation. Students were arranged into teams, set up their own camps to stay or stayed with locals; they studied while participating in production (cultivating rice, picking vegetables, catching fish to improve meals), and were ready to fight. The cultural supplementation content was compiled according to the primary school curriculum, simplified for practicality and suitability for the resistance conditions; social sciences were taught more, natural sciences emphasized knowledge that could be immediately applied to combat, production, and life (Le Van Dat, 2009).

Along with strengthening cultural education for officials and soldiers, the Cho Lon Education Department also focused on mobilizing educators and the populace in the temporarily occupied areas to resist the French colonialists' scheme of using the "Bao Dai card" to manipulate the people; urging teachers not to teach according to the French education curriculum and taking advantage of the opportunity to incorporate patriotic and revolutionary content into the schools.

In May 1951, the Central Bureau of the South divided the battlefield, establishing two sub-regions: the Eastern Sub-region and the Western Sub-region. Cho Lon Province underwent significant changes in territorial boundaries and administrative structure. Duc Hoa district merged with Dong Thanh district to form Duc Hoa Thanh, along with Trung Huyen belonging to Gia Dinh Ninh province (under the Eastern Sub-region). Can Duoc and Can Giuoc districts merged with Nha Be district of Gia Dinh province to become one district (Lien Huyen district) under Ba Ria - Cho Lon province (abbreviated as Ba - Cho province), also under the Eastern Sub-region. Mr. Nguyen Phu Giau - former head of the Cho Lon Education Department - was reassigned as the head of the Ba Ria - Cho Lon province Education Department (Phan Xuan Bien et al., 2005). In October 1951, the restructuring and organization of provincial and basic sector personnel were completed. In each province under the Eastern Sub-region, three working groups were basically formed: Group 1 included the Provincial Party Committee Office, Administrative Resistance Committee Office, Provincial Troop Command, and Police; Group 2 included Mass Mobilization agencies, Viet Minh Front, Finance; Group 3 included Propaganda, Information - Culture, Education, and Provincial Troop Political Bureau (abbreviated as Propaganda - Culture - Propagation - Education). The reorganization of the organization according to the practical requirements of the battlefield was necessary but also caused certain difficulties for the activities of various sectors, including education.

On the other hand, from late 1951, the French colonialists concentrated on implementing the "pacification" plan, establishing dense outposts and watchtowers along both road and river routes, dividing the Eastern and Southwestern battlefields. Communication and supply from the command level to the grassroots as well as between regions became increasingly difficult and inadequate. In the territory of the Eastern Sub-region, the liberated zone was significantly narrowed. In Ba Ria - Cho Lon province, by early 1952, 96% of the area was temporarily

occupied. In Gia Dinh Ninh province, French forces occupied most of the guerrilla areas, and many districts no longer had base areas. Faced with this situation, cultural supplementation classes gradually had to be reduced. By mid-1952, both Ba Ria - Cho Lon and Gia Dinh Ninh provinces no longer had any cultural supplementation classes. In the guerrilla base areas of Duc Hoa and Trung Huyen districts (formerly under Cho Lon province), only a few home study classes with a few students remained. Most teachers joined the armed forces, directly engaged in combat training, as well as effectively performed self-sufficiency tasks, closely adhered to the grassroots, and firmly held their ground (Phan Van Nhan, 2008).

At the end of 1952, a major flood devastated many provinces in the Southeastern region, causing houses to collapse, damaging crops, leading to food shortages, rampant diseases... The teaching staff of Cho Lon province (now information and propaganda officers of both Ba Ria - Cho Lon and Gia Dinh Ninh provinces) often closely followed the grassroots, mobilizing the people to donate food and medicine to help flood victims. Some teachers joined the armed forces, actively trained for combat, as well as effectively carried out self-sufficiency tasks, closely adhered to the grassroots, and firmly held their ground (Phan Van Nhan, 2008).

In February 1953, the Eastern Sub-region organized a comprehensive review of the principles and tasks of work in the temporarily occupied and guerrilla areas, directing localities to continue to rectify mass mobilization work, propaganda work according to the spirit of "taking mass mobilization as the main task, the root of all other tasks." Immediately afterwards, the Ba Ria - Cho Lon Provincial Party Committee conducted an extensive review session on propaganda - culture - propagation - education with focuses: emphasizing the development of various forms of propaganda within the people, building a deep and dynamic working style for propaganda - culture - propagation - education officials. In Gia Dinh Ninh province, the Provincial Party Committee organized a self-criticism and criticism session, creating a new shift in ideology and awareness for the entire Party to create a new momentum for the resistance. The propaganda officer team - including teachers in Duc Hoa and Trung Huyen (formerly under Cho Lon province) - actively participated in compiling documents, composing folk songs, instructing the organization of deep learning and critique sessions for the province's policies, the region's policies...

From the middle of 1953, the resistance in the South began to shift. Throughout the last months of 1953, armed resistance forces in Ba Ria - Cho Lon and Gia Dinh Ninh provinces intensified guerrilla warfare, besieged outposts, and sniper-fired to threaten the French military; creating conditions for the people-civilian-party officials to carry out propaganda tasks, mobilize the masses. Military activities became stronger, and propaganda - culture - propagation - education work became more vibrant. Reports of victories on the battlefields, especially the main battlefield in the North, were disseminated in a timely manner, stirring the hearts of the people. On May 7, 1954, the Dien Bien Phu campaign ended in complete victory. On July 21, 1954, the French colonialists were forced to sign the Geneva Accords to end the war, restoring peace in Indochina (Phan Xuan Bien et al., 2005).

#### 4. Conclusion

After enduring 9 years of resistance against the French in challenging circumstances, under the leadership of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Chợ Lớn Province has achieved fundamental educational accomplishments. From grassroots educational movements to basic civilian classes and supplementary cultural education closely integrated with propaganda and education tasks, educational efforts in Chợ Lớn have significantly contributed to enhancing civic intellect, promoting revolutionary propaganda, and training cadres, teachers, etc., effectively supporting the comprehensive people's war at the local level. The educational activities since those difficult early days have laid a solid foundation for the local education sector in subsequent periods.

The development of mass education under the harsh and intense conditions of war has been continuously maintained, showing progress and effectively serving the resistance against French invasion in Chợ Lớn Province. The educational activities in Chợ Lớn during this period clearly demonstrated evidence of the comprehensive people's war led by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Education activities contributed significantly to the resistance effort, acting as a strength of the resistance campaign. The maintenance and development of mass education during the wartime period contributed to raising civic intellect, instilling patriotism, fostering determination to defeat the French military, and providing manpower for the local resistance against French colonialism.

The development of mass education during wartime in Chợ Lớn has left a positive imprint on the hearts of teachers and students. It laid the groundwork for the establishment of a national, democratic education system, paving the way for the development of education along socialist lines in Vietnam after the country's liberation in 1975.

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