

Notice from the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Decision to Strengthen Theoretical Education

20-03-1951

The *Notice* outlines the following points:

1. **On Current Priorities:** At present, the entire Party and the people of the nation are engaged in urgent tasks such as resisting U.S. aggression and aiding Korea, strengthening national defense, implementing land reform, suppressing counterrevolutionaries, and reorganizing the Party. Therefore, the issue of strengthening theoretical education should not be overly emphasized for the time being, and it is even less appropriate to promote it publicly in newspapers, so as not to distract the attention of leadership organs and the masses.
2. **Propaganda Department's Focus in 1951:** In 1951, the work of propaganda departments at all levels should remain focused on supporting these urgent tasks. This includes establishing propaganda networks, actively participating in the educational aspects of Party reorganization, and strengthening their organizational structure and routine operations during this work, rather than shifting focus to theoretical education.
3. **On Local Implementation:** Theoretical education must still proceed. All localities should, according to their specific circumstances and the principles outlined in the Central Committee's *Draft Decision on Strengthening Theoretical Education*, formulate their own plans and implement them. Through implementation, they should accumulate experience and provide feedback for revisions or additions to the central draft.
4. **Preparations for 1952:** To prepare for the full implementation of the Central Committee's *Decision on Strengthening Theoretical Education* in 1952, a considerable amount of preparatory work must be done in 1951—especially in preparing teaching materials and training theoretical instructors. Each locality should begin using Party schools and the Party rectification education effort to focus on training a group of theoretical instructors in 1951, based on the principles of the central draft. This will allow them to gain experience and gradually expand.

[Document] *Draft Decision on Strengthening Theoretical Education*

(February 1951)

(1)

The education of the entire Party in Marxism-Leninism—Mao Zedong Thought must be greatly strengthened. This is the fundamental method for improving cadre quality and advancing Party work.

Currently, the state of theoretical education within the Party is entirely unsatisfactory. There is no unified national system for theoretical education. There is a lack of suitable beginner and intermediate study materials, a shortage of theoretical instructors and advisors for guided self-study. Little has been done to popularize theoretical content; there is a shortage of accessible books, articles, and lectures on theory. Party newspapers and journals rarely publish theoretical content, and they fail to use theory to explain and guide the everyday lives of the people. There is also a lack of criticism against various non-Marxist theories, which has restricted Party propaganda to a narrow and low level.

The weakness of theoretical education reflects a dangerous trend of **empiricism** in the Party—neglecting theory in favor of experience. The rectification movement launched by the Party a decade ago, which focused on transforming learning attitudes, helped many leadership organs and cadres better grasp the unity between the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism and China’s concrete revolutionary practice. As a result, the Party’s theoretical level saw significant improvement. However, at that time, the primary focus was combating dogmatism, and the struggle against empiricism was not conducted on the same scale. Moreover, thoroughly overcoming empiricism requires broad and systematic theoretical learning—something that had been hindered by the intense wartime conditions.

Now that the civil war has largely concluded, and the Party faces the complex tasks of building a new China, there are better conditions and a more urgent need than ever before for systematic theoretical learning across the Party. It should be pointed out that the lack of development in theoretical study and the persistence of empiricist tendencies are the root causes of some cadres’ shallow understanding of Party policies, their lack of resolve and foresight in work, their insensitivity to new developments, and their tendencies toward bureaucracy, commandism, pragmatism, and even entitlement or degeneration. The Party’s task in learning is to **correct any empiricist tendencies that neglect theory**, and to lead all Party members in a unified and uninterrupted system of systematic study of Marxism-Leninism—Mao Zedong Thought, in order to gradually raise the Party’s theoretical level.

(2)

Theoretical study should be **gradual and step-by-step**. Based on the current state of the Party, each Party member’s theoretical education can be divided into three stages, according to their level of understanding:

- **Level One: Study of Basic Political Knowledge**

This includes basic knowledge about the People’s Republic of China and the Communist Party of China. Teaching materials should focus on explaining the Party’s and the people’s government’s core policies and the fundamentals of communism in simple terms, starting from the real-life experiences of working people. Duration is approximately one year (flexible as needed). All new members and those with only elementary education who haven’t previously studied this must participate. It can be taught in branch study groups, new member training classes, or night schools. Members with only elementary education should also attend literacy schools and treat political education as part of their broader cultural learning.

- **Level Two: Study of Basic Theoretical Knowledge**

This includes basic understanding of social development (covering historical materialism and political economy), the history of the Communist Party of China, Mao Zedong’s biography, and basic knowledge about Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. Teaching materials should use historical narratives to explain the main content of Marxism-Leninism—Mao Zedong Thought, helping students to understand reality from a scientific, historical perspective and prepare to read primary theoretical texts. Duration is around three years (flexible). All members who have completed Level One and have a middle school education should study at this level. Learning can be done through study groups, Party schools, night schools, or self-study. Those whose education level is below high school graduation should take supplementary courses—especially in history, geography, and natural sciences—to prepare for deeper theoretical study.

- **Level Three: Study of Original Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Zedong**
All members who have completed Level Two and have a college-level education should dedicate themselves to lifelong study of these original texts, as well as related works. The aim is to truly grasp the spirit of Marxism-Leninism—Mao Zedong Thought and apply it to solving real-world problems. The main method should be guided self-study, supplemented by lectures at advanced Party schools.

In addition to guiding Party members' study, Party organizations at all levels must also **guide the learning of Communist Youth League members**, ensuring that their education connects with that of Party members. Non-Party individuals with similar study conditions may voluntarily join in Party-led learning. If many non-Party activists in a workplace or school wish to participate, they should be organized into systematic study as much as possible.

(3)

To ensure that theoretical learning is orderly, an **academic year system** and **examination system** must be implemented:

- Each academic year will last eight months—from early March to the end of October. (For rural Party branches, study can take place during the winter and agricultural off-seasons.)
- The remaining four months are for:
 1. Exams and student placement.
 2. Short-term training of theoretical instructors.
 3. Revision of teaching materials.
 4. Other preparations for the new academic year.
 5. Party rectification.
- Each week, a minimum of eight hours must be dedicated to study. Time spent on current affairs and policies must not exceed one-eighth of this total.
- Students' participation level and whether they pass each academic year will be determined through examinations.
 - Political knowledge exams will be organized by prefectural committees (through county committees) and major city committees (through district committees).
 - Theoretical knowledge exams will be conducted by provincial committees and major city committees.
 - Exams on original works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Zedong will be conducted by Central Bureau-level bodies.
- For the highest level of study, exams may be substituted with published lectures or essays. Those who pass a given course will receive a graduation certificate for that course. Those who fail must retake it.

(4)

Solving the problem of theory instructors is currently the key to launching theoretical study throughout the Party. Many Party school training classes lack theoretical instructors, and many study groups at the branch level have become lifeless due to the absence of instructors to lead discussions and answer questions. Self-study cannot become the primary method for the majority of Party members in the short term, and even those engaged in self-study need appropriate learning advisors.

All Party leadership bodies at the county level and above must promptly appoint a group of outstanding Party members to serve as part-time and full-time theoretical instructors as needed by their respective Party organizations. The proposed list should be submitted to the higher-level Party organization for approval. If there is a shortage of instructors or if their level is too low, they should be trained immediately or required to undergo necessary supplementary studies. Leaders of all Party organizations should serve as theory instructors to the best of their ability. It must be recognized that participating in the Party's educational work and helping comrades learn is one of the noblest duties and honours of a Party member.

Part-time instructors should be the mainstay of the teaching force, but wherever over one hundred people are engaged in study, full-time instructors should be added as much as possible. All theory instructors should participate in the leadership work of Party branches. Both part-time and full-time instructors should be compensated according to the time spent on theoretical education work.

Learning advisors are a senior type of theoretical instructor. Advisors needed by Party organizations at or below the provincial level should be appointed by the provincial Party committee or the municipal Party committee in major cities. Those needed by Party organizations above the provincial level should be appointed by the Central Committee, Central Bureaus, or regional branches. Advisors should also be compensated.

Under current conditions, the expectations for theory instructors and learning advisors should not be overly high. For example, they are not required to be able to apply theory to practical problems, nor to fully comprehend the entire body of Marxist-Leninist–Mao Zedong Thought literature. As long as they can accurately explain one theoretical course and are responsible for answering learners' questions in that subject, they should be encouraged. Only in this way can the necessary instructors be found, help them work with confidence, and gradually improve through experience.

Theory instructors must be earnestly cultivated. Party schools organized by the Central Committee, Central Bureaus, regional bureaus, and provincial committees must take on the task of training theory instructors. Each provincial committee should organize three-month training classes or ongoing rotation courses during the annual study break to train all provincial theory instructors at least once a year so they can take on next year's teaching duties. Municipal Party committees in provincial capitals and larger cities should organize ongoing night Party schools to train instructors and other staff. Party committees at the prefectural and municipal levels should regularly convene appropriate meetings for theory instructors to review their work, resolve difficulties, and share successful experiences. The propaganda departments of provincial committees and higher-level Party organizations should establish theoretical education offices responsible for managing intra-Party theory education and serving as advisory hubs for all instructors in their jurisdiction. These offices should be staffed with personnel capable of handling theory education work.

Given the general shortage of instructors and theoretical staff, and the current inability of Party schools to quickly meet this demand, senior officials in propaganda departments, Party newspapers, and Party schools at the provincial level and above should adopt an "apprenticeship" model—gathering a group of excellent young intellectuals around them, guiding them in the self-study of Marxism-Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought, and quickly developing them into theory instructors or assistants in theoretical work.

(5)

The primary responsibility for raising the Party's theoretical level lies with the Party's senior cadres. The main responsibility for promoting theoretical learning across the Party also rests on their shoulders.

Cadres at or above the level of prefectural Party committee secretaries must report annually to the Central Bureau or regional bureau on both their personal study status and that of the Party organizations they lead. Members of Central Bureaus, regional bureaus, and senior officials in central working departments should submit similar reports to the Central Committee annually.

Senior Party cadres must be role models for diligently studying Marxism-Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought. They should develop the habit of consulting the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Zedong whenever they face difficulties or need to improve their work. Senior cadres should promote the correct dissemination of the doctrines of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao in daily propaganda, so as to popularize Marxism-Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought and thereby raise the political consciousness of Party members and the general public.

Party leadership bodies must supervise and guide their propaganda departments and Party-run newspapers, periodicals, and publishing houses to serve the goal of promoting Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. Since these publications are vital tools for theoretical education, the prevailing attitude of neglect among most of them toward this critical responsibility must be firmly reversed. The editorial work of People's Daily*, Study, and China Youth must be improved to make them the primary organs supporting the Party, the Youth League, and the public in learning Marxism-Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought.