

Scientific Basis to Build Criteria for High School Students' Kindness in Vietnam

Truong Thi Bich^{1,*}, Dao Thi Oanh¹, Pham Thi Thu Huong², Nguyen Thi The Binh³

¹Institute for Pedagogical Research, Hanoi National University of Education, Hanoi, Vietnam

²Faculty of Philology, Hanoi National University of Education, Hanoi, Vietnam

³Faculty of History, Hanoi National University of Education, Hanoi, Vietnam

*Corresponding author: bichnxbgd@gmail.com

Received April 21, 2018; Revised June 8, 2018; Accepted June 11, 2018

Abstract Kindness is a core value playing as a foundation for the educating of human's other moral qualities. Vietnam's general education program continues its focus on developing traditional values and national ethics, human's cultural elite to meet the basic and modern requirements in a suitable way for students' ages and psychology. Therefore, "kindness" is necessary to be formed and developed in Vietnamese students. Plus, the research on building kindness criteria framework to serve practical education and the evaluation of educating kindness is very important. Based on the results of theoretical and practical researches on kindness, expression of kindness in relationships between people, the article proposes a criteria framework for Vietnamese high school students' kindness nowadays. The framework includes five groups of characteristic: "Loving and sharing"; "Sympathy and mercy"; "Tolerance and forgiveness"; "Solidarity and having responsibility"; "gratefulness and respect" with 25 equivalent behaviors. That will be a basis for the education and self-education, evaluation and self-evaluation of results of educating kindness for high school students to meet the current social context.

Keywords: kindness, criteria, high school students, kindness criteria, educating kindness in schools

Cite This Article: Truong Thi Bich, Dao Thi Oanh, Pham Thi Thu Huong, and Nguyen Thi The Binh, "Scientific Basis to Build Criteria for High School Students' Kindness in Vietnam." *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 6, no. 6 (2018): 822-827. doi: 10.12691/education-6-6-35.

1. Introduction

1.1. Kindness is a universal value which leads mankind to a good life. For Viet Nam, kindness and loving for others have been manifested since 15 ancient tribes unified as a sole country named Van Lang. It is the value of Vietnamese people formed in thousands of years fighting over natural disasters, enemies to create community bonds and mutual protection. Scientific evidence shows that kindness was mentioned by Confucians from ancient times and is still valued in many parts of the world. Although the understanding of kindness is different from the East and the West but recently the two parts of the world are getting closer in this: kindness is human's nature of doing good things; it can be educated. Kindness is not tangible and general but manifested in good deeds and conscientious behaviors to others [1-6].

Today, as science and technology grow and the world becomes flatter, humanity is put in a civilization run by technologies. Therefore the concern and educating of humanity qualities are more important than ever. Almost all countries are aiming to train their young generations that meet present and future social demands. Therefore, the "consciousness of freedom", "kindness", and "creative

spirit" are of great interest as F. Rabelais once said, "Knowledge without conscience is nothing but the ruin of the soul" [[1]; p.7].

1.2. In the 21st century, the amount of human knowledge is increasing at an unprecedented rate, but there are still global and regional instability and unpredictable uncertainties for each individual and humankind such as: racial conflicts, terrorism, social degradation, and social evils etc. which make people with great conscience ache.

High school students are at the age of nurturing their characteristics, forming their view of the world, human and personality values, and soon will join the workforce. At this age, the students' relationships with others are enriched because their social interaction is expanded. For a part of Vietnamese high school students having opportunities to participate regularly in social and voluntary activities, the expression of kindness is manifested clearly, honestly as: affection love, altruism, and sympathy with people. There are many examples of students help, share with each other in learning and life: a student piggybacks her friend to school every day; another student risked his life to save others; or others saved young children from drowning; many care for the lonely elderly in the community, calm the physical and mental pains for children with serious illness by songs, warm embrace etc. However, there are still standard deviation

phenomena in school such as: some students' indifference when using violence with peers; discrimination; no cooperation when necessary; disrespect to their peers; disrespect and offence to teachers; having no shame when making mistakes or telling liars etc. [1,3,7,8]. Many studies have confirmed that good results in kindness educating will help reduce students' stress, violence in schools; increase self-assessment, mutual understanding and acceptance among students; raise the gratitude to others; help students to focus better, be happier when they go to school and improve their academic performance [12,3,8,9].

1.3. Considering kindness as the highest quality gifted for every human being at birth as well as having potential for cultivating, preserving and promoting throughout life, the necessity of kindness educating for Vietnamese students is always expressed in documents of Vietnam's Party, State and Ministry of Education and Training. Most recently, the draft of the general education curriculum was approved by the Steering Committee for Renovation of Educational Programs and Textbooks on July 27, 2017 after many revisions. The goal of the general education curriculum continues its focus on developing traditional and ethical values, humankind's cultural elite; meeting the basic and modern requirements in a suitable way for students' psychological characteristics. Accordingly, "kindness" is the second of five qualities that should be formed and developed in Vietnamese students. Kindness education is the basis for educating other qualities, from knowledge to humanity, gratitude, and obedience etc. For high school, the goal is to help students build up qualities and capacities of an employee, personalities of a citizen, the sense of the rights and obligations towards their motherland on the basis of maintaining, raising and shaping the qualities and capacities formed at lower levels: peace-loving; having mercy for others, selflessness, sharing without profit etc. [10]. This suggests that research setting criteria as the content for kindness educating is necessary. At the same time, it will suggest the direction of effective measures to educate kindness for high school students.

2. Content

2.1. Theoretical Basis to Propose Criteria for High School Students' Kindness

2.1.1. Defining Kindness and Addressing Expressions of Kindness

According to Oxford Dictionaries, kindness is defined as "a behavioral quality: friendly, generous. A good action". According to the Cambridge Dictionary, kindness is defined as "a behavioral quality: love, goodness, goodwill. A good action".

According to the *Vietnamese Dictionary*, "Kindness is the love for human beings, the willingness to help others when necessary." Kindness is equivalent to "charity", "having mercy" and in contrast to "immoral" [11].

Through reference to a number of national and international documents [1,5,6,7,9,12], we can see that the definitions of kindness are not quite the same. However, there is an agreement between researchers in the nature of

kindness: it is the first criterion to evaluate a human; the foundation to educate other moral qualities for human beings; a necessity to build a civilized and humane society; a strong thread that connects people; the best and most precious value to nurture and keep in each person.

For the expression of kindness, we can find the general characteristics shown in personality qualities such as: *love for others* (care for people, pity for miserable lives, good works to others innocently etc.); *altruism and tolerance* (having no prejudice; willing to forgive others' mistakes; loving the righteousness adequately; hating the evil etc.); *having sympathy and mercy* (mutual understanding of others' emotions and circumstances; putting oneself in the position of others; sympathizing with others etc.); *having responsibility* (doing good for non-profit; not letting others misunderstood; protecting people's legitimate rights etc.); *solidarity, care and sharing* (coordinating to complete assigned works; not taking side, no fighting, help people in difficulties etc.); *gratitude, respect, and trust* (acknowledging others' goodwill, trusting others, respecting other people's opinions, accepting others' good and bad sides; understanding others' personalities etc.) [2,9]. The above expressions will be referenced to build criteria framework for kindness of high school students in Vietnam.

From the results drawn from studying relevant references, a definition of kindness can be given as follows: Kindness is a general personality leading people to believe in the integrity of human beings, always think of doing good things, believing that people can be educated to become good. A person's kindness can be manifested in their love, sharing; sympathy, mercy; forgiveness, tolerance; solidarity, having responsibility; gratefulness, respect in relationships with people around.

2.1.2. Definition of High School Student

High school students are those between the ages of 15 and 18, who are attending high school, entitled to formal education at schools, undertaking educational tasks following school's educational plan and rules which are suitable for their ethical, lifestyle [13].

Here are some basic psychological characteristics of high school students in Vietnam that directly and indirectly affect the results of kindness education in schools:

- The social role of this age has changed fundamentally and this is manifested in their independent role and clearer responsibility for their families (family economy, choice of future job etc.). Many of them have income and have a voice for some issues of their families.

- The rights and duties of citizens as defined by the Constitution (the right to work, vote, the performance of military service, the criminal liability for their own conduct. From 18, they have responsibilities for their countries, nations, international communities, and all their actions must follow laws). They must be aware of the need for perception, training, and self-assessment of qualities and abilities of their personality not only at the present but also in the future.

- Positively searching for their own identity with social purpose. In addition to studying and choosing a career, students have the need to participate in social activities depending on their interests, strengths, specific conditions

(volunteer groups have helped disadvantaged people and children. Among these groups, the Ho Chi Minh Youth Union of the Communist Party plays an important role for most of students at this age group). High school students' participation in social activities enriches their experience and inner lives, which positively influences the development of kindness and goodwill (sharing, respect, having responsibility, respect for conscience, and empathy). Along with the formation of positive psychological qualities mentioned above, there are negative psychological traits shown in high school students that have a negative impact on their perceptions, emotions and behaviors such as: being violent, angry or shy, timid, anxious etc. All these are the causes of violent behaviors or depression.

Some recent studies on the expression of some qualities such as "cooperation", "respect", "having responsibility", "empathy, sharing" among high school students show that most students are aware of and have appropriate attitudes about these values. But the behavioral expression is limited compared to the desire: a part of students in the sample is not really active, does not often follow their thoughts. For example, students respect, accept friends' interests and opinions, but do not dare to tell their friends about their mistakes, do not want to be criticized, do not care about others' unhappiness just because they do not want to be in disadvantage. They also do not dare to defend friends' righteous deeds etc. [8,14].

2.1.3. Definition of Kindness Education for High School Students

Educating kindness for high school students is a process of targeted impact that is planned by schools to students between the ages of 15 and 18 who are attending high schools, to develop students' thoughts of loving and sharing, attitudes and behaviors of sympathy, tolerance, solidarity and having responsibility, gratitude and respect for others through appropriate means.

Kindness has a wide range of content because it covers an individual's entire relationship system with others. Actually, educating kindness is educating kind relationships because it is manifested, developed and promoted through people's relationships. In order to educate kindness, it is necessary to point out its manifestations because educating kindness can not be done in a general way, but through the education of personality qualities via specific behaviors. Framework of criteria and expressions of kindness will be a tool for reviewing the needs, evaluating actual achievements and organizing the education to match with high school students. Through the study of international experience, relevant domestic literature, Mencius's theory of goodness, and the basic psychological characteristics of high school students, the research team can provide the concept of high school students' kindness as criteria to define the manifestations as content of kindness education. Accordingly, high school students' kindness will be limited to some core qualities and expressions of those qualities in relationships with friends, teachers, relatives in the form of behaviors listed. These are the output requirements of the capacity to express kindness in students, as mentioned in the first part, the philosophy of goodness, of the kindness of a person is

shown first in good works. This means that students not only understand and believe in those things, but also have the need to comprehend and express themselves daily in relationships with others.

2.1.4. Definition of Criteria and Criteria of High School Students' Kindness

According to the dictionary of "Practical Psychologist" (X.IU. Golovin, 2001), the **criterion** is a sign on which one evaluates, defines, or classifies something [2].

From this, it can be understood that the criteria of high school students' kindness is the sign, on the basis of which one identifies and evaluates the level of expression of the corresponding moral qualities, such as: *loving and sharing; tolerance and forgiveness; sympathy and mercy; solidarity and having responsibility, gratitude and respect for people around.*

2.2. Practical Foundation for the Criteria of High School Students' Kindness

2.2.1. Results of Practical Researches on the Criteria and Basic Expressions of Kindness

In order to have objective and scientific documents in developing criteria of high school students' kindness, in addition to studying the theoretical basis deeply, a survey on teachers and high school students has been conducted. The purpose of the practical survey is to understand the perceptions of high school teachers and students about kindness, the expression of kindness, and the role of kindness education in developing students' personalities. The used method is Writing Investigation and Mathematic Analysis. The research sample consists of 27 teachers who are teaching and 88 students studying in high schools in Hanoi. The feedback forms are designed for teachers and students differently. There are three questions asked in the open question form:

Question 1: Ask the people surveyed to write their thoughts/ conception of kindness?

Question 2: Ask the people to list signs/ expressions of a person having kindness?

Question 3: Ask the people to think about the meaning of kindness and how to effectively educate kindness for students.

The responses are then collected, quantitatively treated in percentages of comments. The results are as follows:
 * Responses of teachers and students to question 1 show a consistency among students, among teachers, between teachers and students. At the same time, the understanding of teachers and students in the sample is quite consistent with the current scholarly view of kindness. Specifically, kindness is a good quality with the foundation of the love shared between people, which makes life better, leads people to live for others without attempting to profit.
 * At the second question, answers of teachers and students are summarized and presented in the table below. It can be seen that the signs of kindness given by teachers and students are quite plentiful, quite similar and connect to their conception of kindness (in question 1). However, teachers' opinions seem to be more generalized and broader than those of students.

Table 1. Comments of students and teachers about the content of kindness

No.	Student's comment (n = 88)	Number & %	Teacher's comment (n = 27)	Number & %
1	Loving, sharing, having sympathy and tolerance for others' mistakes	13/88 14,77%	Loving, sharing and help people in difficulties.	17/27 62,96%
2	Loving between people and with the surrounding world	47/88 53,4%	Having tolerance and forgiveness	15/27 55,55%
3	Caring, taking after and treating others well	7/88 7,95%	Value others and themselves	5/27 18,51%
4	Helping each other in difficulties	3/88 3,40%	Solidarity, having responsibility, encouraging each other to fight the evil	10/27 37,3%
5	The sympathy for people having difficult lives.	11/88 12,5%	Paying Respect and gratefulness to others	13/27 48,14%
6	Sharing and helping without thinking about themselves and their benefits.	14/88 15,9%	Treating people well without taking benefits and live for others.	6/27 22,22%
7			Having sympathy and goodness	18/27 66,66%

Table 2. Basic criteria of kindness by teachers and students

No.	Criteria of kindness	Teacher's comment				Student's comment			
		Disagree (%)	Partially Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Rank	Disagree (%)	Partially Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Rank
1	Loving and sharing	0	0	100	1	3,50	2,30	94,2	2
2	Having sympathy and goodness	0	16,0	84,0	4	3,50	9,40	87,1	3
3	Having tolerance and forgiveness	0	0	100	1	3,50	14,1	82,4	5
4	Solidarity and having responsibility	0	0	100	1	2,30	2,30	85,4	4
5	Gratefulness and respect	0	8,0	92,0	3	2,30	2,30	95,4	1

Next, the above listed signs were re-expressed by the research team in the form of corresponding criteria and expressions (with additions based on the results of theoretical researches and studies of relevant legal documents), then sent back to people surveyed for comments. There are 05 criteria in total: "Loving and sharing"; "Having sympathy and mercy"; "Altruism and tolerance"; "Solidarity and having responsibility"; "Having gratefulness and respect". The results of Table 2 are the opinions obtained from teachers and students in the sample.

The results in Table 2 show that although the evaluations of teachers and students for each criterion of kindness are vary, in terms of scale and hierarchy, all criteria are accepted as basic signs (criteria) of kindness. * For question number 3 on the role of kindness, according to the correspondents, kindness is the core value, which plays a decisive role in the formation and development of other qualities and leads people to the values of "The true", "The good", and "The beautiful", such as: Loving each other, being tolerant, having responsibility, sympathy, sharing, being open, trusting in the righteousness, having positive thoughts and actions. As can be seen, the above answers on the meaning of kindness also affirmed that the content contained in it is if we want to educate kindness, we have to educate these qualities in the first place. This is quite consistent with the general idea of the content of kindness mentioned in academic documents, though not yet sufficiently.

As for how to educate kindness effectively, most of the correspondents emphasize the role of school education: providing knowledge and organizing skill training to educate students about traditional and modern values through integrating into the teaching of potential social sciences (literature, history, geography, extracurricular activities etc.); family education and social education aim to connect and collaborate to build a practical environment

for the learning results students receive from school education.

The above survey results are important basis for addressing the criteria and expressions of Vietnamese high school students' kindness.

2.2.2. Relevant legal Documents Research Results

At all time, human resources are always considered the most important strength of a nation because all material and spiritual values are made by human's hands and minds. In the period of accelerating industrialization, modernization and international integration, human resource quality has become increasingly important in Vietnam. It decides the successful national building. The human force includes high school students today is also taken into account. Thus, in guiding documents of the Ministry of Education and Training, there are specific requirements for the results of moral education for high school students. The requirements for educating kindness for students can be seen clearly through this. In "*High School Rules...*", students are provided with clear instructions on what to do and what not to do. For example, in section 1 of Article 38 on student's duty, it is stated that students have to "Respect teachers, officials and staff in schools; unite to help each other in learning, training etc."; Article 40, section 1, stated that "high schools students' behaviors and language must ensure the cultural principles, be suitable for the morality and lifestyle of their age"; Article 41 on which behaviors students are not allowed to do, in sections 1, 4 and 5: "No offence of teachers' dignity, honor, and no violation teachers' and other students' bodies"; "No fighting, breaking of the order and security in schools and public places"; "Not allowed ... to use drugs, weapons, explosives, poisons etc. to participate in social evils" ... [13]. Similarly, in the Regulation on Assessment and Classification of Secondary and High School Students

issued by the Ministry of Education and Training dated 12/12/2011, there are four categories to evaluate students' ethic as "Good", "Fair", "Medium" and "Weak". In this evaluation, there are some criteria similar to students' expression of kindness. For example, students in "Good" category must "Be actively involved in fighting negative actions, social evils and preventing crimes"; "Respect teachers, the elder; love and help the young; have a sense of team building, unity, and beloved by others etc." Meanwhile, students classified as "Weak" if they are "Impolite, insulting others' dignity, honor; violating others' bodies"; "Fighting, breaking order and security in schools or society ..." [16].

The above mentioned content is an important legal basis for the research group to develop criteria of kindness as the content used for educating high school students in Vietnam.

2.3. Proposing Criteria of Kindness and Its Basic Manifestations of High School Students in Vietnam

The above mentioned research results on the theoretical and practical basis are important materials for the establishment and proposal of a framework including 05 criteria and 25 basic expression of kindness of high school students in Vietnam. This framework has been agreed by teachers and assessors through a method of consultation and in-depth interviews on a sample of 27 teachers. The criteria framework can be detailed into a list of specific behaviors for use in researching, educating and evaluating the results of educating kindness for students.

Teachers say that the expressions are important suggestions for them to organize educating kindness for students while teaching the subjects they are responsible for. These are suggestions for educational content that can be extracted from the subject or from other related activities in schools. In particular, the result of an effective kindness educational process is to make each individual educate himself or herself into a kind person through appropriate, positive self-training. It is also the ultimate goal of school education and is especially important in educating the values of kindness.

3. Conclusion

In the age of information technology, digitalization and the knowledge-based economy, goodwill relationship between people is put more values than ever. Today's education is a scientific and technological education. At the same time, it always emphasizes the humanity. Human is aiming to build a civilization of peace and tolerance based on the system of attitude respecting the values of national independence and national identity, promoting the right to live and development of people, in which the core is human nature, and humanity expressed through each individual's social relationships. This is a good suggestion for educators, social managers; human resource developing policy makers in Vietnam with the criteria for kindness proposed to educate high school students today is a concretization to help Vietnam's young generation integrate into the world effectively.

Table 3. Framework of criteria and expressions of high school students' kindness

No.	Criteria	Expression
1	Loving and sharing	(1) Taking notice to others around (not for benefits) (2) Having sympathy for unlucky lives (3) Helping people when they are in need (4) Being friendly with people around (5) Protecting people less lucky
2	Sympathy and goodness	(6) Understanding the situation of people around (7) Standing in their shoes to understand them (8) Having sympathy for people less lucky (9) Being diligent and sincere for others' benefits (10) Seeing values of people around
3	Tolerance and forgiveness	(11) Accepting the difference/having no prejudice while communicating with others (12) Forgiving friends' mistakes (13) Having adequate interest for the good (14) Hating and excluding the evil (15) Fighting with the indifference and inhuman about the fate and benefits of others
4	Solidarity and having responsibility	(16) Cooperating with others to successfully complete assigned tasks/No fighting and taking side (17) Reminding others to complete their assigned tasks (18) Before doing something, always thinking of the consequences related to others (19) Protecting the righteous and natural rights people deserve (20) Taking responsibility/Not letting others be misunderstood
5	Gratefulness and respect	(21) Accepting/receiving others' goodwill (22) Trusting in people (23) Respecting others' opinions (24) Listening and receiving others' comments (25) Accepting others' drawback and disadvantages

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Hanoi National University of Education for financial support under project code: SPHN 17 – 3 VNCSPP.

References

- [1] Pham Tat Dong (2014), Theoretical and practical issues of reforming basically and comprehensively the educational system following the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Party, 11th term. Vietnam Educational Publisher, Hanoi.
- [2] Nguyen Thi Kim Dung (1999), Some measures to build friendly relationships between students in one class of secondary schools. Vietnam Journal for Educational Studies, No. 12, p.3-4.
- [3] Pham Minh Hac (2015), Studying Vietnamese national values with Psychology and Educational Studies. National Political Publishing House. Hanoi.
- [4] Ho Chi Minh (2016), Revolutionary capacity and morality. Changing working styles. Tre Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City.
- [5] Nguyen Thi Tho (2012), Some basic issues and solutions for students today. Scientific Conference Book «Moral education for university and college students in Vietnam», Institute for Educational Studies – Ho Chi Minh City National University.
- [6] Mencius (2011), Books of Mencius and Cao Tu, Four Books, Culture and Information Publishing House (translated by Quoc Trung).
- [7] Nguyen Thi Kim Dung (2000), Effects of friendship on the forming and developing human qualities of students. Vietnam Journal for Educational Information, No. 79, p.58-59.
- [8] Dao Thi Oanh, Le Quang Hung (2017), Expression of Industrial culture in high school students today. Vietnam Journal of Psychology, April 2017, p.31-43.
- [9] Deanna M. Kaplan, Madeleine de Blois, Violeta Dominguez, Michele E. Walsh (2016), Studying the teaching of kindness education programs in schools, Evaluation and Program Planning, Volume 58, October 2016, Pages 160-170 (online).
- [10] Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (2017), General education programme (passed through by the Steering Committee for reforming general education textbooks on 27 July 7 2017).
- [11] Hoang Phe (Chief Editor) (2003). Vietnamese Dictionary. Da Nang Publisher.
- [12] Pham Minh Hac (2010), Studies of value. Theoretical basis for forming and building common values of Vietnamese today. Vietnam Educational Publishing House. Hanoi.
- [13] Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, Regulations for secondary schools, high schools, and multiple-level schools. Issued along with Decision No. 12/2011/TT-BGDĐT, dated 28/3/2011.
- [14] Vu Thi Ngoc Tu (2018), Expression of some living values in social relationships of high school students, HNUE Journal of Science, Hanoi National University of Education, 63(2A), p.198-205.
- [15] Golovin X. I. (2001), Practical Psychologist Dictionary. Kharvest Publisher, Minsk (Russian version).
- [16] Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, Regulations for evaluating and raking secondary and high school students. Issued along with Circular No. 58/2011/TT-BGDĐT dated 12/12/2011 by the Ministry of Education and Training.