

Review Article

## The Role of Higher Education in Humanistic Education for Students

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**Abstract:** Human values are a core value for every human being. Humanity will help people live together peacefully, will help people find the meaning of their lives. To effectively educate humanities for students, first of all, each school must be a truly humane environment, must innovate the educational mechanism and method. At the same time, it is necessary to find the compatibility of the value standards taught in the school with the natural development law of society to strengthen the belief in values in students. Therefore, research to continue educating and spreading humanity to students today is extremely necessary in both theory and practice, in order to contribute to building and nurturing generations of Vietnamese students who are perfect in personality with national and humanistic values suitable for the development of the new era.

**Keywords:** Humanities, human values, human values education for students.

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### 1. PREFACE

A society that values humanistic education can only have a peaceful and happy life. Humanistic education helps people live together in harmony and find the meaning of their lives. Humanistic education will create a society in which human values are promoted and respected. Therefore, humanistic education is always a never-ending issue.

Research on humanistic education in higher education is an issue of urgent theoretical and practical value to realize the noble purpose of educational activities - helping people become good people, developing their intellectual and moral capacities. Based on the urgency of educating and spreading humanistic values in the "digital age", from the role of higher education in educating humanistic values for the young generation, we chose to research the topic: "Humanistic education for students of Vinh University in the current period".

### 2. CONTENTS

#### 2.1. General Perceptions

##### 2.1.1. The Concept of "Humanities" and Related Concepts

According to Sino-Vietnamese language, "nhan" means people, "van" means culture, civilization, beauty. Humanity is understood as the characteristics of human nature, combined with it are knowledge, culture, civilization. Humanity is the beautiful values of human

beings, especially spiritual values such as intelligence, soul, emotions, and dignity. Talking about humanity is talking about the good attributes and qualities "belonging to human culture" in distinction with animals or objects.

Humanism is a system of ideas, viewpoints, and feelings that respect human values such as intelligence, emotions, dignity, strength, and beauty. Humanism is not a purely moral concept, but also includes the way of perceiving and evaluating people in many aspects (position, role, ability, nature, etc.) in relation to nature and society. Humanism aims to affirm, promote and respect other human beauties such as physical beauty, body shape, differences, etc. Humanism also aims to affirm and respect human rights and human intrinsic values.

Before accepting the Western concept of *humanism*, in Vietnamese there existed both the concepts of *humanism* and *humanity*. These two concepts are commonly used in the fields of Chinese traditional culture, ethics, and philosophy. It is the synthesis of ancient democratic ideas, the Confucian doctrine of "humanity", the Buddhist doctrine of "compassion and love", and the liberation of man in the thought of Lao Tzu. Humanity is literally understood as the path of man. It is the synthesis of ancient democratic ideas, the Confucian doctrine of "Benevolence and righteousness", the Buddhist doctrine of "compassion and charity", and the liberation of man in the thought of Lao Tzu. *Humanism* is literally understood as the path of man.

That path is also called morality. It is morality that must respect the legitimate rights of people, must not violate the life, body, freedom of thought and emotion of people. Humanism requires love, respect, forgiveness, tolerance. Humanism emphasizes the moral aspect. Humanism emphasizes more on cultural factors, values and human rights. Although these two concepts have similarities in terms of connotation, which are humanity, love, concern for human happiness, human values, they are not completely identical as the Western use of the term *humanism*.

In Vietnamese, the concepts of humanity and humanism are in the same semantic field as *compassion*, *humanity*. Compassion is also understood as love for people with tolerance, forgiveness, sympathy, and mercy. Compassion and humanitarian spirit are considered a value, a manifestation of humanity. The concept of *humanity* is understood as the nature, the essence of human beings from the moment of formation. Humans are born with a good nature. Confucianism says: "Human nature is inherently good". However, the process of growing up is also the process of absorbing many other values. Therefore, humanity is the essential characteristic of human beings, including inherent instincts and other values. Talking about human values is emphasizing the ontological aspect of human beings. Respect for human values and the essence of human beings is also an expression of humanity.

### **2.1.2. Humanity in Vietnamese Culture**

All nations in the world, at any time, have mentioned the development of qualities, personalities, and social values in humans. The humanism in Vietnamese culture originates from the traditional morality of the nation, from the ancient Eastern democratic thoughts, especially the inheritance and development from the viewpoints of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought on humans, liberation and comprehensive human development. Comprehensive human development for individuals in the community is a fundamental feature of the new society in the predictive sketches of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on communism, the first stage of which is socialism. Accordingly, in addition to the trend of high economic development, socialism is a liberating social regime and creates conditions for people to develop more freely, comprehensively and humanely. Inheriting the theoretical achievements of Marxism-Leninism on human nature and human liberation, President Ho Chi Minh affirmed: "To build socialism, first of all, we need socialist people", "For the benefit of ten years, we must plant trees, for the benefit of a hundred years, we must cultivate people". In the process of leading the revolution, especially in the period of renovation, the Communist Party of Vietnam has applied the above viewpoints to develop a human development strategy.

Traditional humanistic values, Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought and the policies and

viewpoints of the Communist Party of Vietnam on human beings, human liberation, comprehensive human development and humanistic values that reflect the breath of the times, are together creating orientation for humanistic education for the current generation of young Vietnamese people.

The Vietnamese humanistic spirit with its noble and good values and manifestations has always been nurtured and become a part of the good nature of the Vietnamese people. That humanistic spirit has always been realized in very meaningful and practical actions and deeds. For the people of the Central region, living with storms and floods has become inevitable, even a rule of survival. However, being familiar does not mean being indifferent or resigned. The Vietnamese people, with their tradition of empathy, attachment, and "blood flows through the intestines", right in the middle of the storm and flood, the army, police, and youth forces have become the spearheads to evacuate people and property, and to rescue and provide emergency relief. Small boats and canoes of individuals and volunteer groups have also rushed into the storm and flood to save people and help people. Amidst the grief and loss, Vietnamese humanity has created a "miracle" to warm, rekindle faith and motivate people in flood-hit areas to overcome difficulties and revive life.

The spirit of humanity, love, respect and tolerance towards people is a precious tradition of the Vietnamese people. It permeates and becomes a part of the good nature of every Vietnamese person. When the world fell into the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries treated each other with hostility, blame... but in Vietnam, the spirit of humanity - kindness, compassion in each person, was once again aroused and created an extremely strong ripple effect. The humane nature of Vietnam has been concretized and realized into humane policies. The image of Vietnam's "rice ATM" has surprised and admired the world. The Vietnamese government has launched an unprecedented support package from the budget and especially targeted at the weak and vulnerable - the links that are easily broken in the "anti-epidemic machine" that is running at full capacity. Planes rushed to leave the country to the world's epidemic areas to welcome and bring back people living abroad. Gourds, bunches of vegetables, and kilos of rice were brought to quarantine points by the elderly and children, and the image of a heroic Vietnamese mother over 90 years old sitting in the middle of the night sewing free masks, etc. All of those actions and images are beautiful symbols of the Vietnamese humanistic spirit. That humanistic spirit has the power to spread like a call from the heart and create great material and spiritual strength to help the nation overcome difficult times.

It can be said that the humanism in Vietnamese culture today is a continuation of the humanistic tradition of the nation along with the values of humanity and the times. That humanism needs to continue to be nurtured

in the ideals and conscience of every Vietnamese person. So that when the nation speaks up, that spirit will be aroused, creating a spreading power, even becoming a call to incredible strength.

## **2.2. The Role of Higher Education in Educating Humanities for Students**

### **2.2.1. The Necessity of Educating Humanities for Students Today**

Students and young people are young people who will participate in many social activities for a long time and will be the owners of small families - where the next generations are created and nurtured. Students - those who are studying at universities and colleges - are also known as "intellectual youth". This force will take on a leading role in the construction and development of the country. Therefore, higher education, in addition to the goal of training human resources with good professional knowledge, must also create citizens with good qualities and humanity.

Humanistic education is part of the mission of education in every country. Nowadays, the implementation of this educational mission has new favorable conditions thanks to the strong support from the fields of technology and communication. However, it is also facing many difficulties and great challenges of the new era.

In the era known as the digital age, automation with the 4.0 revolution, human values are being reviewed and challenged. From the perspective of integration and globalization, many people believe that, along with the strong development of technology, many good values of traditional culture and human values are being forgotten or overlooked. The new era is posing many opportunities for development, mixed with pitfalls and temptations. People are faced with many choices, so hesitation, calculation, pragmatism or mistakes in choosing values are also likely to occur.

The national renovation that we are carrying out is a large and comprehensive movement, aiming to transform an agricultural society into an industrial, urban, modern society; from a subsidized culture to a market culture; from an inward-looking culture to an outward-looking culture; from a culture that values affection to a culture that values reason. In that process, the human values of the Vietnamese people are also changing. The elevation of material values, the elevation of money values and getting rich in a market economy with fierce competition have contributed to the development of positive values such as: dynamism, creativity, diligence, thrift. However, the excessive elevation of material values and money has formed a negative lifestyle. Many people get rich by smuggling, counterfeiting, corruption and many other bad behaviors. In fact, money and the materialistic, hedonistic lifestyle of people today have corrupted social morality. Cultural and social goals are often overwhelmed and even eliminated by economic

and material goals. There have been many phenomena of marketization and commercialization of cultural and social activities, even profiteering through charity activities, labeling them as charity or spirituality and beliefs to gain illegal profits.

The shift to a market-oriented culture that emphasizes material values and personal values has a positive meaning in creating motivation for dedication (in the relationship between dedication and enjoyment), contributing to creating a balance in people's lives... However, it has also created a lifestyle of pragmatism, enjoyment, selfishness, and laziness, especially among a large number of young people, students. Worrying manifestations have become increasingly common among students. The reasons for choosing and pursuing a career of today's students have also shown the practicality and pragmatism in the thinking of young people. The book "In Pursuit of Knowledge" (original: *In Pursuit of Knowledge*; Stanford University Press, 2006) warns about a trend in contemporary higher education: "... the passion for the humanities is on the decline. The rising fields are those that research money, attract money, and promise money." In recent years, the career choices of our students have also clearly revealed this. The social and humanities sector is increasingly narrowing, while the economic sector is attracting more and more human resources.

The strong development of technology fields, especially the internet and social networks, has created opportunities for learning, communication and contact at a new level. Its positive side is to open up global connections, "bringing the distance closer" in social relationships, eliminating barriers of geographical distance, space, time, age, health and creating a common voice, common values of a global nature, ... However, its challenges and negative aspects are also very large. It limits and narrows people's interactions and understanding of the real world around them. People can enthusiastically visit, praise each other, contact each other on social networks, can help and support each other quickly and practically by "transferring money" but are afraid, lazy and even do not want to meet, care about, and greet each other in real life. "Virtual life" is a new concept of today's era. Its negative aspects are shown in laziness, fear of communication, or politeness, cliché, fakeness, "pretending" and even cheating each other online. Digital technology, digital life promote practicality and convenience, but at the same time increase pragmatism and insensitivity in society. "Virtual life" can create kind people on the keyboard, keyboard heroes, but many times it makes life lack authenticity, lack of real human warmth.

Along with the transformation of the 4.0 industrial revolution era, Vietnamese society and the human values of Vietnamese people are also in a period of transition, therefore, it contains many contradictions and conflicts that need to be resolved before it can reach

unity and shape. To overcome the limitations and promote the strengths of this transition period, Vietnamese people, especially the young generation of Vietnam, need to be fully equipped not only with the knowledge of the new era but also with the human values of the nation and humanity.

Equipping humanistic qualities or educating humanity for the young generation, especially students, is to perfect their personality and promote their professional capacity, helping them to make effective contributions to the development of society and the country in the new era. In the context of the 4.0 Industrial Revolution, the biggest competitive advantage is not resources or technology but people. Whoever has talent will have a competitive advantage and develop in the new era. It is necessary to build a human development strategy and strongly innovate education to equip knowledge, promote creativity, skills and vision for learners. In parallel with training and attracting talent, especially in the field of science and technology, focusing on human development in a harmonious and humane society is the core for Vietnam to grasp opportunities as well as overcome challenges to develop and integrate.

In recent years, Vietnamese higher education has focused too much on training professional skills and vocational skills, and paid little attention to educating students about human values. This is a one-sided and pragmatic approach, a major shortcoming in the formation of a complete personality. Higher education needs to fully review its role and adjust it from the content and methods of education.

Educating students about humanities is equipping students with humanistic values - core values for every human being. Educating students about humanism is to make students aware of their own values, starting from human nature, human love, the combination of each person's abilities expressed in activities with intelligence, skills, professional conscience, with the will to progress, aiming to ensure their own life as well as their family's, on that basis enriching their material and spiritual life, with the sense of attachment and contribution to society, responsibility to society, in the spirit of patriotism, community spirit, nation..., contributing to society, building and protecting the Fatherland. Those contents are also the orientation for educating about humanism in higher education today.

### **2.2.2. The Role of Higher Education in Educating Students in Humanities**

- *Higher education creates good opportunities for students to experience and affirm their own abilities, to be respected and encouraged to develop their creativity and personal abilities.*

Without appropriate education, there will be no appropriate human resources. Nowadays, as the country

develops and integrates more and more in the conditions of the scientific and technological revolution, we cannot forget the role of higher education. Higher education is one of the factors promoting the development of people's knowledge. With the attention of the government and society, higher education is increasingly playing its role in training young generations, abundant human resources for the development of the country.

Article 5 of the Law on Higher Education of Vietnam (2012) defines the general goals of higher education as: Training human resources, improving people's knowledge, nurturing talents; conducting scientific and technological research to create knowledge and new products, serving the requirements of socio-economic development, ensuring national defense, security and international integration; Training learners with political and ethical qualities; having knowledge, professional practice skills, research and development capacity for scientific and technological applications commensurate with the training level; having good health; having creativity and professional responsibility, adapting to the working environment; having a sense of serving the people.

Thus, the goal of higher education is aimed at three basic criteria that we want to have in today's educational subjects, which are: knowledge, skills and attitudes. Of those three criteria, educational theory ranks attitude education first, followed by knowledge and skills. In other words, educating human personality and promoting humanity is the top priority and the ultimate goal of education.

For higher education, the educational object is students, a special social group that is acquiring knowledge and professional skills at colleges and universities to prepare for their careers after graduation. One of the most important psychological characteristics at this age is the development of self-awareness. Thanks to the development of self-awareness, students have knowledge, attitudes, and the ability to evaluate themselves to proactively adjust their personal development in a direction suitable to social trends. Students have initially formed a worldview to perceive and evaluate problems. They have developed the need and desire to succeed. Studying at university is a good opportunity for them to experience themselves and assert themselves. Students develop the ability to ask questions and seek the truth; the ability to analyze and criticize contemporary issues.

In the era of the 4.0 Industrial Revolution, higher education institutions will no longer be just teachers, students, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories... but will be ecological environments with 3 core characteristics throughout and affecting all school activities: digitalization, research and innovation. The output of the training process in the 4.0 Industrial Revolution is a human resource with capacity, innovation

and entrepreneurship spirit. Research and summaries from international experience show that, to achieve that output, the basic content that schools need to provide to learners in the era of the 4.0 Industrial Revolution will be STEM education (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and liberal education.

- *Higher education provides opportunities for students to develop comprehensively and maximize their potential.*

Higher education discovers the abilities and talents of learners and helps them develop their full potential. Higher education aims at the comprehensive development of human beings. In addition to the factors of capacity and professional qualities, higher education also focuses on training health, nurturing interests, attitudes, moral values as well as correct spiritual values. Higher education creates conditions for learners to develop themselves comprehensively, not only in terms of knowledge but also in terms of intelligence, health, attitude, and ethics in life.

In the 4.0 higher education, the scope of interaction is very large, the distance of geography, space and time seems to be erased. The educational environment does not only take place within the school but also expands to the global scope. Learners can actively study documents as well as interact with lecturers at any time using computers or smartphones. The development of online learning forms will help learners save time, effort and costs. The "Uberization" trend in education allows learners to study anywhere, anytime. They will choose the subjects, lecturers, labs, libraries of your school in the linked system. With this method, students truly become the center of the training process. It also clearly demonstrates the humanity of education, schools will save costs, space and time, students can also get reduced tuition fees thanks to schools sharing resources.

- *Higher education nurtures and encourages in students the attitudes and values necessary for the sustainable, good development of individuals and society.*

Higher education is not only a reflection of the learner's intellectual maturity and an opportunity for learners to achieve their personal career goals and economic efficiency; moreover, higher education is of immense importance to society as a whole. Higher education is not only a private good, but also a valuable public good. It opens the door to our understanding of the complexities of modern society, and it allows us to contribute to the well-being of our communities and nations.

Higher education imparts knowledge and deep understanding to help learners reach new limits of knowledge in different areas of life - specialized fields. Higher education is not only to expand the intellectual capacity of each individual in their field of expertise, but

also to help them broaden their vision and understanding of the world around them. Higher education acts as a "nurturing system" for all areas of life, providing society with trained people in all areas. These people will be fully capable individuals with a high sense of responsibility towards the community, striving to promote the quality of life and social justice, minimizing socio-cultural differences. Higher education nurtures and encourages in both lecturers and students the attitudes and values necessary for the sustainable and good development of individuals and society, and from there, replicates these attitudes and values to the whole community.

Our Party and State always pay attention to education, especially in the context of rapid development of science and technology. The 8th Conference of the 11th Party Central Committee issued Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW on fundamental and comprehensive innovation of education and training, meeting the requirements of industrialization and modernization in the context of a socialist-oriented market economy and international integration (November 4, 2013). The Prime Minister issued Directive No. 16/CT-TTg on enhancing the capacity to access the Fourth Industrial Revolution (May 4, 2017). Ministry of Education and Training has developed a Project to Support Student Start-ups by 2025; a Project to Improve the Capacity of Lecturers and Managers of Higher Education Institutions to Meet the Requirements of Fundamental and Comprehensive Innovation of Education and Training in the 2019-2030 Period; The Strategy for Overall Development of Higher Education for the 2021-2030 period, with a vision to 2035, serves as the basis for innovation, comprehensive and long-term sustainable development of the higher education system.

To effectively take advantage of opportunities and overcome challenges from the Industrial Revolution 4.0, higher education needs to raise awareness of the importance of the Industrial Revolution 4.0; of changes in the job market; of the mission of universities in preparing high-quality human resources and participating in restructuring the labor market. Universities are places that provide high-quality human resources for society, and must also comprehensively change in terms of model, program content and training methods. In addition to training knowledge and skills, enhancing internship practice, information technology and foreign languages, training with visionary thinking, innovation and sustainable development is very important. Humanistic values, traditional values and harmony must be the support and foundation for social development in the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

### 3. CONCLUSION

In summary, the value of higher education lies not only in professional knowledge, but also in the good human values that higher education brings. Those values

will help students make more effective contributions to society when they graduate and become truly mature and grown-up people. Nowadays, university graduates have many opportunities to become leaders in state agencies, enterprises, and private companies. This enables them to make the most of what they have learned in college and enables them to serve their own interests, their nation's interests, and more broadly, the interests of the world.

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