

## THE CURRENT EDUCATION ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR VIETNAMESE STUDENTS

### *A ATUAL EDUCAÇÃO EM ÉTICA PROFISSIONAL PARA ESTUDANTES VIETNAMITAS*

### *LA EDUCACIÓN ACTUAL EN ÉTICA PROFESIONAL PARA ESTUDIANTES VIETNAMITAS*

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**ABSTRACT:** With the cause of industrialization and modernization, especially by the impact of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. the role of education and training are changed dramatically, and also from the direction of the Vietnamese government on the concentration of education and training policy improvement which leads to the foundation and driving force for industrialization and modernization of the country, this paper will analyze and present the basic concepts of professional ethics education and the status quo of education of professional ethics at the universities in Vietnam. The key research method applied in this paper is the critical realist approach. Later, the recommendations are proposed for the enhancement of the effectiveness of professional ethics education for Vietnamese students at the universities.

**KEYWORDS:** Critical realist approach. Professional ethics education. Vietnam.

**RESUMO:** Com a causa da industrialização e modernização, principalmente pelo impacto da Revolução Industrial 4.0. o papel da educação e do treinamento mudou drasticamente, e também da direção do governo vietnamita na concentração da melhoria da política de educação e treinamento que leva à fundação e força motriz para a industrialização e modernização do país, este artigo irá analisar e apresentar os conceitos básicos da educação para a ética profissional e o status quo da educação para a ética profissional nas universidades do Vietnã. O principal método de pesquisa aplicado neste artigo é a abordagem realista crítica. Posteriormente, as recomendações são propostas para o aumento da eficácia da educação em ética profissional para estudantes vietnamitas nas universidades.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Abordagem realista crítica. Educação de ética profissional. Vietnã.

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**RESUMEN:** *Con la causa de la industrialización y la modernización, especialmente por el impacto de la Revolución Industrial 4.0. el papel de la educación y la formación se modifican drásticamente, y también de la dirección del gobierno vietnamita en la concentración de la mejora de la política de educación y formación que conduce a la base y la fuerza impulsora para la industrialización y modernización del país, este documento analizará y presentará los conceptos básicos de la educación en ética profesional y el status quo de la educación en ética profesional en las universidades de Vietnam. El método de investigación clave aplicado en este artículo es el enfoque realista crítico. Posteriormente, se proponen las recomendaciones para mejorar la eficacia de la educación en ética profesional para los estudiantes vietnamitas en las universidades.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Enfoque realista crítico. Educación en ética profesional. Vietnam.*

## Introduction

“Ethics is the root of the revolution” – this statement is affirmed by President Ho Chi Minh as a great master of the Vietnamese revolution, the beloved leader of the Vietnamese working class and the entire nation (1992, p. 545). The nationwide moral education in general and professional ethics for students at the universities, in particular, are from the inherit and application of his moral thought. Engels affirms “in fact, each class and even each profession has its ethics” (MARX; ENGELS, 1995). However, in the reality of education and training in Vietnam, professional ethics education is currently posing many problems of urgent theoretical and practical significance and has yet met the development requirements. Therefore, the education and training of high-quality human resources are still limited and have not been strongly adapted to social needs. It has yet resolved well the relationships between the quantity and the size requirements, between literacy and human education (COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM, 2016). To overcome these, the Vietnamese government launches out the renovation policy which confirms education's purpose is “to create people who have the high intelligence, a strong body, the rich spirit, the pure morality” (CONG, 2001). Intelligence, morality, and competence are sufficient conditions for the successful implementation of industrialization and modernization in Vietnam. To effectively educate students on professional ethics, it is required to have a holistic overview and analysis of the current of professional ethics education and the findings will be a foundation for proposing the recommendations to improve professional ethics education for students, contributing to the education of “both virtuous and talented” persons who effectively serve the national renovations. Thus, this paper is done in alignment with that objective, and it is also a source of the pedagogical and managerial viewpoints and references.

## Literature Review

### The concept of “ethics”

Ethics is understood in many aspects and gained much interests of scholars by many different research. Ethics is a form of social consciousness, is a synthesis of social rules, principles and standards, through which people voluntarily adjust their behavior to suit the interests and happiness of human and social progress in the relationship between people and people, between individuals and society (NGOC, 1987). More of that, ethics is a set of rules and standards to regulate and evaluate human behavior towards each other in social relations and relations with nature. (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, 1991). In addition, Ethics is a system of rules and standards expressing self-discipline in the relationship between people and people, between people and the social community, with nature and with themselves” (NGOC, 1987). Besides, Ethics includes the ethical standards of human behavior in the direction of good, avoiding the direction of evil. Each society, each social group and each individual can interpret good and evil in different ways, depending on their conception of life and interests” (TUAN, 2008). According to the Dictionary of Philosophy, “Ethics is one of the earliest forms of social consciousness, including the principles (ethics), rules, and standards which govern human behavior in relation to other people and with the community (family, village, class, ethnic group or the whole society).

As the above analysis, under the different viewpoints of the human-beings, ethnics is related to *good and evil, justice and injustice, duty, and honor*” (NGOC, 1987), or “moral consciousness is the whole concept of good and evil, conscience, responsibility, happiness, justice...and about the rules for evaluation and regulation behaviors between individuals and society, and among persons in society” (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, 2005). However, all the concepts focus and recognize that ethics is rules of conduct which perform the following basic functions as the function of educational orientation, the function of behavior adjustment, and the function of testing and evaluation.

In addition, Ethics is a form of social consciousness. Under this concept, ethics will be changed when the economic, political - social conditions are changed. The morality of different socio-political regimes also has some problems called “the universal humanity of morality”. Moral values such as Kindness, conscience; self-respect, humility, politeness... present in any socio-political regime and are also the standards for human behavior (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, 2002).

## **The understanding of the profession**

According to the Vietnamese Dictionary, “A profession is a job that one does throughout life” (CHAT, 2001) like the teaching profession, the medical profession, business profession, etc. All types of profession have the direct relational objects. As a consequence, professions are divided into the following four categories: (i) Professions related to engineering (fitter, machine repairer, processor); (ii) Profession related to signal (typesetter, proof-reader, typist, cryptographer); (iii) Professions related to animals and nature (animal husbandry, aquaculture, geology); (iv) Professions that directly relate to people (managers, trainers, doctors, salespeople, pedagogues, tour guides) (CHUONG; THANG, 2001). More of that, based on the required qualifications, professions can be classified as follows:

- Non-specialized professions: These professions require to achieve the adaptation in a short period with low labor or skill requirements.
- Semi-specialized professions: These are related and required to have a limited level of expertise; knowledge and skills which are sufficient to perform simple operations or strictly specialized operations.
- Specialized professions: These require to be along with a formal training/ education process and an official certificate of skills issued by training / education institutions. In addition, the employees are admitted working in the respective professional field. The professional certificates can attest to a qualification at the basic, intermediate, and university level.

## **The concept of professional ethics**

As known, in each field of profession, a set of requirements, rules, and standards are required. And, professional ethics is understood as a system of ethical standards reflecting the requirements of society and the profession itself for employees in the related working fields, thereby helping them to fulfill their tasks with the best results (HUY, 2015). Therefore, many types of professions and various types of corresponding professional ethics are existing (i.e. professional ethics of lecturers, police, doctors, engineers, coaches, athletes). Professional ethics is expressed through professional behaviors and labor results with the following functions:

- To orient the human education with their profession which it leads to the right

qualities for society and the profession.

- To adjust the human behavior with their profession to be complied with the rules and standards in their endeavors.

Professional ethics owns a close relationship with professional competence, they combine to create the individual personality in a certain professional field. Professional qualities are the basis for establishment of the professional competencies. At the same time, professional competence, after being established and trained, influences the formation of ethical standards. However, it is difficult to distinguish clearly what is professional ethics and what is professional competence, because they are often intertwined and blended to create a unified whole, which is the personality of the individual working in that professional field.

### **The concept of professional ethics education**

As for learners, to be able to work in a certain profession, the institutions must perform the following three tasks:

- To equip the necessary professional knowledge.
- To build up the skills and techniques that the profession requires.
- To educate

As a consequence, learners gain enough basic knowledge and specific ethical qualities of the professional field.

The institutions must carry out the above three tasks in close relationship with one another: This task is the premise, the basis for the performance of the other task. If omitting or performing poorly on any task, the outcome of the professional education process will be affected. In reality, many institutions pay too much attention to the implementation of the first two tasks, and third task are normally omitted. Theoretically and practically, it is shown that if the implementation of the first two tasks is very difficult, the implementation of the third task is even more complicated.

Professional ethics education can be considered as an interaction between professional ethics education activities and learners to form necessary professional qualities for them (NGU, 2001). Thus, from the perspective of system theory, professional ethics education includes many instructs as purpose and requirements, contents and methods, purposes, means, the participating forces, teachers, learners, and results of professional ethics education.

Specifically, the purpose and requirements of professional ethics education stipulate the specific contents of professional ethics education that required to be formed in learners. After determining the content of professional ethics education, the method of professional ethics education will be prescribed. In the relationship between the force participating in professional ethics education and the learners, the professional ethics education force plays the key role in organizing and controlling the learners' activities. Under that educational impact, learners promote their active and creative roles in the process of self-training and self-improvement of professional qualities. The movement of all the above factors creates the results of professional ethics education. This result reflects the correct or incorrect movement of the factors and the whole system (TRANG, 1993).

In addition, it is noted that professional ethics education is an open system because its constituents also have close relationships with other areas of social life as politics, ethics, law, culture.

## **Methodology**

The paper used a critical realist qualitative approach of which data were collected from 8 universities of which are 4 public and 4 private universities in Vietnam. Also, 140 respondents as 10 lecturers in charge of the professional ethnic module, 7 universities' administrators, 6 heads of faculties, and 127 students were selected base on availability for interview. In the translation of critical realist studies, groups of bodies have a direct and indirect influence on the problems and help uncover how professional ethnic module occurs at the universities. To understand well, besides the direct observation to the classes of the module, the authors carefully crafted but wide-ranging questionnaire aimed at eliciting responses from the respondents. The questionnaire was designed and administered to the participant to be interviewed in. The questionnaire consisted of two sections which were of structural disguised and structural undisguised questions. Section 1 was the demographic characteristic of respondents while section 2 was made up of the variables of the related problems. Later, the meta-analysis has been done for the findings of the paper.

## **Results**

### **Current situation of professional ethics education for Vietnamese students**

In the achievement perspective, professional ethics education for students in Vietnam gains certain results. Graduates acquire professional ethical qualities, meet the requirements of society, and are recognized and trusted by labor recruitment agencies. In all programs of the Vietnamese universities, Vietnamese students after graduation must reach to the certain acquirement of important moral qualities. In the past years, professional ethics education for students has been given great importance by the institutions. There is a compulsory professional education module which has been lectured in all the Vietnamese university named Marxist-Leninist and there is Marxist-Leninist faculty/ department which are to regularly renew the content and methods of teaching and learning the Marxist-Leninist science module, integrated education, and orient professional ethical values into the contents of these subjects.

Also, there are many programs which are for professional ethical education to students as volunteer programs which help them to be sticky with community cohesion, share with the people's difficulties in difficult places, encourage the spirit of compassion, tolerance, and educate the self-discipline and or throughout the Youth Union activities (i.e: annually, the Vietnam Youth Union organizes volunteer programs in faraway mountainous and island districts as villages cleaning, free medicines and medical care, consultation for hygiene and disease prevention, road repairs, etc. The number of students participating in those voluntary activities are increasing.

Besides, at the universities, several professional ethics education measures have been applied for students per the reality of society's requirements and the institutional tasks based on the psycho-physiological characteristics and personality of students. Therefore, the system of professional ethics education measures has created a great effect, contributed to improving the training/ education quality of the universities. It is also noted that several measures are regularly and effectively used by lecturers, such as organizing holidays - festivals, educating ideology - politics, educating professional traditions.

Besides the achievement, many limitations in professional ethics education for Vietnamese students are occurring. Most of the students have an average awareness and attitude, a few have a good awareness of professional ethics criteria. However, some students still have wrong or incomplete awareness and attitudes. Surveyed results on awareness, attitude, behavior and the learning-training results of Vietnamese students show that

Vietnamese institutions has not used or used ineffectively measures to educate professional ethics for students.

However, new measures are still rarely used and many shortcomings on professional ethics education for students are expressed out. The interest of institutions and other related stakeholders are not commensurate with the requirements set forth by the goals of professional ethics education. Education in professional ethics, politics, and ideology has been implemented as planned and only carried out through the activities of youth unions, student unions, etc. On the other hand, “Ethics” is a subject that works well with professional ethics education, but it has not been taught. Most of the ethical education for students is only an indirect form of education through the orientation day as the first day of the academic year to deliver to students the regulations or rules for their social, academic activities, and life skills.

There are many causes of the above limitations. The first limitation comes from the very rapid changes in the psychology - physiology of students. This is from the influence of nutrition, living conditions, and sources of information that impact the students’ physiology of students. The present generation of students have much more developed in height, weight, and physical strengths. Besides, due to the influence of spiritual life, value orientation, lifestyle, and conception in modern society, the lifestyle of students are also changing much. To face with those challenges and changes, the professional ethics education must be fully understood, and psychological knowledge must be equipped with the students with the aim to assist them in dealing with their future difficulties. The second limitation are from the programs and materials. As known, professional ethics education for students is a combination of activities integrating with all other activities and programs and materials are officially yet approved for this program of professional ethics education. The third limitation is on the pedagogical capacity of which it is related to the human resources (lecturers). The lecturers who understand best are lack of the knowledge of the subjects and pedagogical skills and capacity. In terms of the pedagogical capacity of the lecturer, that is an crucial factor including a set of different capacities as teaching capacity; educational capacity; organizational capacity. However, lecturers in Vietnam mostly only pay attention to this matter and consequently their pedagogical capacity is not comprehensive. More of that, the limitation of pedagogical capacity is the most difficult obstacle to overcome in professional ethics education which leads its limit of evaluation and achievement or measures to educate professional ethics for students effectively. The fourth limitation is by the shortage of specific direction from institutions’ administrators. As known, performance of lecturers is managed and appraised by the direct team leaders or faculty heads. However, with the module of



professional ethics education for students, the work performance of the lecturers is difficult to evaluate and manage, and it is also difficult to quantify the evaluation criteria. Since it is a long and complex process, its effectiveness depends on subjective and objective factors. Therefore, related institutions' administrators are required to send out the concrete and specific activities for the course of professional ethics education and to make professional ethics in a unified, proactive, creative and effective manner.

Recommendations of enhancement of the effectiveness of professional ethics education for Vietnamese students.

Raising the awareness of lecturers and students in terms of the position and role of professional ethics education.

By the effect of the market economy, the ethics and lifestyle of students in Vietnam is also impacted. The phenomenon of moral degradation and the emergence of more and more social evils, etc. have caused the serious consequences (CHUAN; HUYEN, 2002). Many students and lecturers at the universities are not fully aware of the position and role of ethics in forming the personality of Vietnamese people in general and students in particular. Therefore, it is very crucial to improve the morality of students. The moral education of personality has its own rules and principles. Therefore, the teaching principles of professional subjects cannot be used instead of ethics education. For Vietnamese students, it is required to have both virtue and talent. Raising the ethical awareness for students needs to be done by many measures such as organizing for students to study basic science subjects to raise general awareness, with emphasis on educating students on moral values like traditional education of the university, the faculty, the nation, the locality, discussions with lecturers who are experienced and gained many achievements to contribute to the institutions and the society; organizing and closely directing students to study politics, rules and regulations of the university, especially freshman who have just enrolled to the institutions; checking, evaluating regularly and drawing lessons from the implementation of the rules and regulations set forth by the institutions and faculty and improving the effectiveness of the professional ethics education for students through extracurricular activities, club activities, the talks about the institutions' traditions on a regular basis; creating opportunities for students to have correct knowledge in practicing the professional ethics for themselves.

The teaching organization of the specialized or basic science subjects are required to associate the provision of scientific and professional knowledge with the content of ethics education. For students, enhancing the position and role of ethics must necessarily be taught through main subjects in the classroom at an appropriate level and amount of time. Students

must be educated to set the goal of moral cultivation on a par with the goal of knowledge accumulation in the learning process. In any subject, it must also ensure ideological when transmitting knowledge, thus, it requires lecturers when preparing lessons and teaching in class to consider that problem specifically and seriously. Also, all other related stakeholders must use those problems as case studies to put into the content to consider and evaluate the teaching quality of each teacher.

### **Enhancing the role of advisors in professional ethics education for students**

As known, the advisor is the person who give advice the institution's resolutions, guidelines, rules, and guiding ideas to the students in their class. The advisors can be the lecturers on behalf of the board of administrators of the university to convey the requirements to the students on the professional ethnics and each student and the collective are fully aware of their responsibilities to comply and voluntarily implement. The advisors should provide the class directions and recommendations to fulfill the educational requirements, including the institution's ethics education. With their key position and function, the advisor is a crucial force in the education of ethics and the political ideas for students in the classroom. Also, in order to well perform the function of professional ethics education for students, first of all, the advisors should build the student groups into a collective which is good at self-governing, united, and controls the behavior of individuals through public opinion. Thus, it can the collectively stimulate and encourage ethical behaviors and habits in accordance with social standards. Thereby, each member of the collective can cultivate good qualities of teamwork attitudes, solidarity spirit, spirit of cooperation and help, honesty, love for the profession, etc. More of that, the lecturers in charge of module of professional ethics are persons who present their tasks of organizing and coordinating the educational subjects in the institution, with the family, and in the society to unify the educational process according to a common action plan. First of all, the lecturers in charge of module of professional ethics should associate and coordinate with the institution leaders, the faculty heads, the other lecturers, the student affairs committee, etc to have the best outcomes for this module.

## **Regularly and closely combining professional ethics education in the teaching and learning activities**

Effectively exploiting the combination of ethics education and teaching activities is a need to foster and raise moral awareness and the right attitude towards ethical standards for students. Teaching the subjects make students self-consciously and systematically occupy the ethical concepts, thereby helping them to orient themselves in the face of social phenomena (good, bad) to choose how to behave properly in ethical situations. The social sciences and humanities have a great role in the ethics education of students. Much of the knowledge in these subjects is related to students' values, attitudes and manners, ethical behavior in society, in their later professional practice. The natural sciences also contribute to moral education and form social qualities such as good thinking, an attitude that values the cause and effect, and a sense of improving social knowledge. More, subjects such as Basic Principles of Marxism-Leninism, The Line of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh's Thought, Psychology... have placed a key role in equipping students with basic understanding of the moral qualities and duties of citizens... Through these subjects, students will have a self-conscious attitude to practice moral qualities, considering them as moral standards that each citizen should strictly follow.

The findings of the current teaching situation in Vietnam shows that the institution's teaching staff are qualified to integrate ethical education into their professional lectures. However, the lecturers only attach importance to the knowledge in the lectures and do not pay attention to integrating the ethics education into the lessons for students. On contrast, the content of ethics education integrated in the professional teaching has not been concretized. Many lecturers own their difficulty and confusion in incorporating the ethics education into their lectures, especially for those who teach the specialized subjects. Therefore, this lecturer team needs to realize their responsibilities in education and outcomes. Throughout the education process, to produce the qualified the graduate who are good at their profession and gain the ethical and responsible for the profession. The professional ethics education for students must be unified in all subjects at the institution and must be properly understood by all lecturers, The combination of moral education in lectures must be harmonious and delicate. The combination is too restrictive, stereotyped, and formalistic. This easily leads to boredom and does not bring effectiveness to education. In addition, the institution should direct the professional teams to develop contents that combine ethical education with the subjects, and integrates moral education and political thought into a criterion for evaluation

and grading the teaching hours of teachers. Currently, in the content of the lectures assessment, the institution is applying this criterion, but it is not clear.

### **Building a healthy educational environment to improve the quality of professional ethics education for students**

The environment is related to the condition for completing and developing professional ethics. The environment hereinafter refers to the physical environment, the psycho-social environment, and the educational environment at the institution. The environment has a great impact on the process of ethics training and plays a crucial role in professional ethics education. Environmental factors such as family, friends, etc. have an influence on the personality education for students. If conditions and environment are good and healthy, it will contribute positively to the ethical education process. On the contrary, the bad environment will have a negative and counterproductive effect on education. The proactivity and determination of any individual in education and self-education are extremely important. If human themselves are lack of their self-consciousness, the will to strive, and disregarded discipline, etc. The problems including ethical violations will also occur. By practical activities as organization of the group study, the pair study, and extra activities should be conducted regularly under the supervision of the head teachers. In addition, building a cultural environment in the institution must be through educational activities, political activities, news talks, concerts, competitions, etc. For students with weak manifestations, it is necessary to regularly approach, persuade, sensitize, combine special education to encourage them to take this subject to participate in social activities, pay attention to the timely praise when they have achievements. It is required to organize for students to study and interact with the outside environment such as visiting the companies, drug factories, medicinal gardens, and hospitals near the institution. In short, the process of ethics education is the responsibility of the institution, how to help them achieve the criteria and the professional ethical qualities.

### **Implementing the rules, regulations of life and study in the institution to practice ethical behavior for students**

As a principle, it is necessary to make students understand the necessity of rules and regulations for each individual's education, thus, they can exercise self-discipline. Rules and regulations are seen as tools to control the operations of the institution, and for all of students

and other relatednesses. Rules and regulations must really serve the purposes of learning, living, and developing good qualities, and they must be edited clearly, concisely, and be easy to understand.

The other organizations in the university organize the extra activities as youth team for regularly urging students to comply with the rules. Launching an emulation movement between classes, courses, rooms and faculties on the implementation of institution rules and regulations as punctuational class participation, class cleaning and hygiene, etc. Also, building a good model as an example of good people and good deeds in the mass media, in the institution's and faculty's notice board, etc. should be done. In order to strictly and fully implement the rules and regulations, it is necessary to have the supervision and control of the institution to help students turn the implementation of the rules and regulations into the ethical habits.

## **Conclusion**

As from the above analysis on the status quo of professional ethics education for Vietnamese students, the findings show professional ethics education for Vietnamese students has achieved certain results in recent years which can fulfill a qualified workforce with sufficient professional qualities and professional capacity to meet the increasing demands of society. Many students have a good awareness of professional ethics education; thereby, with the best efforts to cultivate, practice morality, lifestyle, personality...to become both talented and virtuous people. However, there exists many limitations in professional ethics education for Vietnamese students, and it is required to have timely solutions. The simultaneous implementation of recommendations as presented will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of professional ethics education for Vietnamese students.

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