

## **The Effects of an Informal Values Education Programme on the Development of the Concept of Responsibilities among 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students from Ethnic Minority Groups in Vietnam**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the effect of an informal values education programme on the development of concept of responsibilities among 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from ethnic minority groups in Vietnam. For this purpose, 38 students from an experimental group received a values education intervention, while 38 students from a control group did not. The intervention programme was adapted into the Vietnam culture in general and into the Vietnam ethnic minority groups' characteristics in particular. The pre-test and post-test of both groups were evaluated using a questionnaire that measured children's concept of responsibilities designed for the purposes of the study. Findings showed significant differences between the pre-test and post-test for the experimental group on the specified variables but not for the control group. Based on the results, an informal values education programme that has been culturally adapted is therefore suggested to make a positive impact on the development of concept of responsibilities among 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from the ethnic minority groups in Vietnam.

*Keywords:* Responsibility, moral education, values education.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### *Formal Values Education Programme for Children in Vietnam*

Nowadays, at all levels of the Vietnamese education system, moral education is incorporated in the formal curriculum and taught as a single subject of study besides other subjects (Duong, 2000; Doan, 2005; Vo, 2005; Hoan, 2006; Long, Anh, & Hien,

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2007). Each level has particular goals: Moral education in primary school concentrates on character and personality building, while the focus of syllabuses in secondary school is on citizenship education, emphasising the notion of developing a socialist citizen (Hao, 1992; Hoan, 2006). The ideas of inculcating socialist thoughts and socialist principles are as important as building intellectual ability in higher education. Consequently, Marxist sciences and Ho Chi Minh's thoughts are compulsory taught courses in the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum (Doan, 2005).

Chapter One, Article 20 of Vietnamese Education Law indicates that moral education in the primary school mainly focuses on building character and personality for children, which aims "to teach students to respect, love and show good behavior towards grandparents, parents, teachers, older people; to love brothers, sisters, and friends; to be sincere, confident, eager to learn, and be appreciative of nature's beauty" [Socialist Republic of Vietnam - Ministry of Education and Training (SRV-MOET), 2004b]. From Grades 1 to 5 at the primary level, the syllabus of moral education was designed with different topics for each grade. Ethics lessons are usually taught separately using pictures, games, storytelling, rhythm and rhymes. There are always comprehension questions followed by inference questions at the end of each lesson. The contents of the lessons focus on one of the following five aspects: (1) matters relating to self, character and personality; (2) relationship of

self to other people; (3) matters relating to nature; (4) matters relating to national identity and love for nation; and (5) matters related to community and society (Doan, 2005).

In Vietnam, the poor quality and inappropriate methods of moral education might increase social problems and decrease morality among young people (Nguyen, 2005). Perhaps, moral education in the formal curriculum has poor content and boring teaching method, and has been mistakenly replaced by political and legal teaching; therefore, it has very little impact on the development of personality, character and morality of students (Duong, 2000). Consequently, the goals of moral education are not easily achieved, as expected in the Education Law (Socialist Republic of Vietnam - Ministry of Education and Training (SRV-MOET), 2004a). Key social values are gradually deteriorating among the young generation, and this is a major concern of Vietnamese educators today (Vo, 2005).

"Values education" and "moral education" can be used interchangeably in this article. They can be defined as "the aspect of the educational practice which entails that moral or political values as well as norms, dispositions, and skills grounded in those values are mediated to or developing among students" (Thornberg, 2008, p. 52).

#### *The Need to Have an Informal Education in Teaching and Learning Values for Primary Students in Vietnam*

There are two general approaches described in the literature of values education

(Halstead, 1996; Solomon, Watson, & Battistich, 2001). The traditional approach uses direct teaching, exhortation, rewards and punishments as the way adults transmit the morals of society to children to help them become conforming and nice people (Durkheim, 1961, 2002). The second approach is more progressive or constructivist which “emphasizes children’s active construction of moral meaning and development of a personal commitment to principles of fairness and concern for the welfare of others through processes of social interaction and moral discourse” (Solomon *et al.*, 2001, p. 573). Typical methods of this approach are based on reasoning and explanations, deliberative discussion upon moral dilemmas, and participation in decision-making processes.

According to Sanger and Osguthorpe (2005), this distinction between the traditional approach and the constructivist approach implies that there are educational programmes or approaches that can fall in between them. Thus, the third approach called the critical approach is introduced. In this approach, the major concentration is on the moral influence in school, in the practice of school discipline and in hidden curriculum that has far-reaching effects without being directly noticed (Giroux & Penna, 1983). In other words, how value education can take place in everyday life in school is the main question. An ethnographic study by Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (1993) found that the moral life of classrooms was expressed as two dimensions: promoting moral instruction and encouraging moral

behaviour by deliberate attempts, such as classroom discussions about moral issues, posters with moral messages on the classroom wall, and spontaneous moral comments on students’ behaviour, as well as moral practice by activities that can embody morality such as classroom rules and regulations, and by embedding morality in the content and structures of curriculum.

According to Soriano, Franco, and Sleeter (2011), values must become part of a process of living and awareness so that they can become integrated and effective in regulating behaviour when a link between cognitive reflection on values and effect is established. Hence, the content of value education must not be transmitted directly as well as standard values should not be based on a system of unmodifiable social norms that regulate personal and social life. Value education must address a connecting process of the person’s configuration and his/her own system of personalised values that carry feelings and have been adopted and lived by that person. In other words, participants are not passive recipients in values education, and because values are not learned, they have to be key actors in their own process of discovering, living and internalising values.

Values education in an informal context reveals several advantages over formal education (Reyes, 1999):

- (1) Because of the lack of the compulsory which is emphasised in formal education, informal education can eliminate the negative connotations of imposed learning.

- (2) There is usually a closer contact between participants in informal education than in formal education, thus it is easier to bring into education process the chance to start from the situation and needs of these participants or to generate opportunities providing a space for significant learning.
- (3) The role of the person who directs intervention in informal education is more like a facilitator than an instructor.
- (4) An active, participative methodology that encourages greater involvement of the participants is usually applied in informal education.

In the modernisation context of Vietnam society today, family bonds become less solid because both parents work outside the house (Vo, 2005). In nuclear families, this situation is especially obvious when children are sent to school from a very young age and have to spend most of their time at school. The education for children depends completely on their teachers' responsibilities and practices. In addition, young Vietnamese also start searching for their own identity by imitating the image of models, singers, movie stars and artists, which only promote luxurious, material life and earthly values (Doan, 2005). Moreover, most primary schools in remote and highland areas have difficulties in practicing value education, mainly in delivering value education lectures in classroom. According to Hoan (2006), culture and school curriculum

must reflect the values of the country and each province, especially the specific characteristics of each ethnic minority group. In spite of this, the Vietnam Socialist Party and Government have paid more attention to and made more efforts in improving the quality of value education in primary schools to meet the requirements of comprehensive personal development of students (Hao, 1992, 2009). This also highlights the need to change the method of values education in primary school in these regions focusing on informal teaching and learning values for primary students from ethnic minority groups in Vietnam so as to help them develop the concept of responsibilities (Doan, 2005; Hoan, 2006).

Nowadays, educators in Vietnam are seeking an informal values education that is suitable for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from the ethnic minority groups in remote and highland regions. The programme the researchers designed was inspired by the hypothesis of Hao (1992) who proposed the education theory: "Values education for primary school students – it means organizing the real-life in educative environment at school for children". Social construction in everyday life is composed of knowledge, rules, values, practices, and habits, and is maintained by the social interactions and the sharing of language among the actors (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). In addition, although children are considered subject to many sets of power relations from parents, teachers and elders, are allowed to have only few decision-making rights (James, Jenks, & Prout, 2001), and they are not just

passive recipients but also active subjects in their own socialising process. Thus, they are constrained by structure, and are active agents in and upon this structure at the same time (Prout & James, 1997; Corsaro, 2005). Thus, identity, social life, and morality are only established within social and cultural processes, and are constructed and reconstructed in day-to-day social interactions (Atkinson & Housley, 2003).

Hao (1992) was the first Vietnamese psychologist to bring all these ideas to apply to Vietnam's values education. A broad interactionist and social constructivist perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; James *et al.*, 2001; Atkinson & Housley, 2003; Corsaro, 2005; Iscan, 2011) must be used as a theoretical framework in organising the real-life educative environment at school for children's values education (Thornberg, 2008; Hao, 2009; Soriano *et al.*, 2011). That is the right direction because it matches the current level of psychological development of primary school students. However, the problem is the effects of that value education projects will be hard to gain without clearly determining specific activities in the sequential stages of students' development (Hao, 1992). Thus, a new educational perspective has led the values education process to be integrated in the organisation of daily life at school for children. Ethics, value orientation and concept of responsibilities of students are formed and expressed through their behaviour, attitude, and activities in daily life in educative environment at school

(Hao, 1992, 2009). So, educators can identify and adjust appropriate impacts of values education in day-to-day interactions between teachers and students and between students and students.

Value education for primary school students involves different types of activities such as studying, playing, involving in extracurricular activities and Children's Organisation or Youth Organisation, and visits, as well as simple activities such as eating, sleeping, or taking care of personal hygiene. It is worth noting that while organising various kinds of activities for primary school students, educators should lead the organisation, concentrating on providing knowledge about norms, value systems and stimulating students to experience the value system in order to internalise it.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### *Participants*

Two groups children were selected by using non-probability convenience sampling from a total of 300 5<sup>th</sup> grade minority students from one primary school in Vietnam. The school in this study was a primary school in a remote region of Dak Lak – a mountainous province at Highland Central of Vietnam. The percentage of children from ethnic minority groups in this primary school was 93%. A total of 38 students from one class were assigned to the experimental group, while 38 students from another class were assigned to the control group. This random assignment process could help eliminate extraneous variables. The age of the respondents was

11, and slightly more than half of them were girls (51.1% female for the experimental group and 50.3% for the control group).

### *Procedure*

The findings from our previous study (Quyên, Zaharim, Hao, & Son, 2013) showed that the concept of responsibilities among 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from ethnic minority is weaker than that of peer partners from the ethnic majority group and this difference is statistically significant. Thus, an informal values education programme was especially designed in order to help improving the concept of responsibilities for children from ethnic minority groups. This informal values education programme was designed based on the psychological characteristics of children from ethnic minority groups (they are usually shy and less confident when joining social activities). This programme encourages them to positively participate in school activities and improve the concepts of values and responsibilities themselves.

A questionnaire was given to both the control group and the experimental group for the pre-test. The programme for the experimental group was conducted for 3 months, but not for the control group. After the intervention was completed, the same questionnaire was given to the control and experimental groups for post-test.

An informal value education programme was designed as an integrated programme, focusing mainly on developing values and responsibilities suitable for elementary school students.

This programme was designed to suit psychological and physiological development of 5<sup>th</sup> grade children, so it would have comprehensive impacts on cognition, emotion and behaviour of the children. The programme was designed based on the value education's stages (Soriano *et al.*, 2011). A value education should include three stages: creative perception of reality which elicits emotions and feelings, forming personal options by critical interiorisation, and personal change and real commitment by action and expression. The programme should also integrate an informal value education into daily environment of school (Thornberg, 2008; Hao, 1992, 2009; Iscan, 2011; Soriano *et al.*, 2011).

The main purpose of the informal value education programme was to encourage children to take part in various interesting educational activities that would have natural effects on the development of their values and concept of responsibilities. Thus, in such a way, the students would not need to follow strict schedules and rules of educational institutions. The intervention programme was carried out by adding more activities into the general activity programme of the Ho Chi Minh Youth Organisation in primary schools in Vietnam. Teachers and leaders were trained carefully by the researchers before they led the programme. The programme was then delivered by teachers and the leader of Ho Chi Minh Youth Organisation in the primary school in such a manner that the students could freely and easily communicate with them.

This programme incorporated the observation of responsibilities and the real experiences of what contribute to making good children in the family, good students at school and good children in society. Therefore, incorporating themes that contribute to developing the concept of responsibilities is an essential task.

The value education programme that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade student participants underwent in this study was composed of four units.

***Unit 1: “Literacy space: A story for every day”***

**Purpose:** The vivid content of morality tales fostered awareness of the requirements and standards of behaviour, as well as the characteristics needed in primary school students. At the same time, rich images and emotional contents of the stories could help students experience emotional vibration. The ideas exchanged between the story teller and students after the stories enabled students to select values by themselves in order to improve their responsibilities concept.

**Time:** Every day, choosing and telling a story in 15 minutes before class time.

**Location:** The classroom.

**Procedure:**

- 1) Students sat around the teacher, listened to stories from the teacher that included value orientation contents for elementary students. Topics included

“good children in the family”, “good students in school” and “good children in society” (“Uncle Ho’s good children”) such as: loving the country, loving people, bravery, honesty, humility, obedience, being filial, and so on.

- 2) After listening to the story, the teacher posed some questions to encourage children to think and share their thoughts, ideas, feelings or comments on the meaning of the story with the teacher. Based on that process, the teacher would strengthen the accuracy of the students’ norm concepts of students and helped them experience the norms and values included in the stories’.

***Unit 2: Extracurricular activities for primary students at school***

**Purpose:** Extracurricular activities were organised as recreational activities that had high educative impacts on children’s responsibilities concept through learning by playing. Through problem solving that was incorporated in the topics of “good children in the family”, “good students in school” and “good children in society” (“Uncle Ho’s good children”), the teacher stimulated children to think, evaluate, and reveal their choices of values and their responsibility concept. Based on these, the teacher helped students to consolidate the

correct value choice or adjust the incorrect value choice which was not consistent with the standard values required at their age.

Time: Once a week during school.

Location: In the classroom or in physical education room.

Procedure:

Students were divided into small groups, with each group competing against others in solving problematic situations.

The teacher raised problematic situations and asked the groups to discuss and find solutions. Children in each group discussed together, shared ideas and came to a consensus. After that, each group, in turn, introduced one presenter who then delivered the solutions on behalf of each group.

The teacher gave comments on the solutions of each group, thereby reinforcing the correct solutions, adding ideas for incomplete solutions or adjusting incorrect solutions in order to help students form suitable value orientation and responsibility concept.

### ***Unit 3: Games and dancing or singing groups***

Purpose: This activity was especially consistent with the psychological characteristics of students from ethnic minority groups: they love to join cultural entertainments. By joining such activities, they could overcome their shyness, feel more confident in building value system and appropriate

responsibilities concept for themselves through lively and fun songs, dances and games.

Time: Four sessions were held each month in school for Children's Organisation and children's teams.

Location: In the classroom or the school grounds.

Procedure:

The teacher introduced new songs, dances and games and helped students practise them. Games, dances, songs were selected by topic, such as pride in the homeland and country, loving teachers, friendship, school, family and so on.

Children sang, danced and played games in big groups. While they were singing, dancing and playing, the teacher or instructor talked to them about the meaning of the songs, dances, and games, hence incorporating values into educational contents and contributing suitable values and responsibility concept for the children.

### ***Unit 4: "Corner of beautiful words"***

Purpose: Folk verses and proverbs are treasures of knowledge and education about ethical standards of the previous generations that have been passed down to the next generation. They consist of short sentences with catchy tunes and are easy to remember so they should become education instruments that are extremely useful in forming values orientation for children. Moreover, all the ethnic groups in

Vietnam have proverbs and folk verses. Collecting folk verses and proverbs of all ethnic groups and displaying them in the “corner of beautiful words” would help to close the gap between ethnic groups and strengthen the sense of solidarity in the children.

**Procedure:**

Students collected folk verses and proverbs of the ethnic majority and minority groups that had educational contents or value orientations, presented them on paper and then hanged them on the class walls. The papers were displayed visibly and beautifully and were updated weekly.

*Measurement*

The questionnaire was constructed based on the literature on children’s moral vales (Doan, 2005; Quyen, Zaharim, Hao, & Son, 2013). This questionnaire had three dimensions: “good children in the family”, “good students in school”, “good children in society” (“Uncle Ho’s good children”) and was suitable for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students (see Table 1.). Each dimension included questions in the form of situations with three given options that expressed and revealed children’s concept of responsibilities in their value orientation. Students were asked to choose the option which reflected the action they took in real life.

TABLE 1  
The Concept of Responsibilities for Children

Dimension	Responsibilities
1. “Good children in the family”	Being filial Being obedient Loving other younger children Respecting and being polite to older people Helping family to do appropriate work
2. “Good students in school”	Honest in studying Independent in studying Serious during lessons Respecting teachers Being in solidarity with friends Following the rules of the school and class
3. “Good children in society” (“Uncle Ho’s good children”)	Loving the country Protecting the environment Loving the people Loving to work Being modest, honest, brave and virtuous Keeping personal hygiene

These dimensions had acceptable reliability coefficients:  $\alpha = 0.76$  for “good children in the family”,  $\alpha = 0.74$  for “good students in school” and  $\alpha = 0.77$  for “good children in society” (“Uncle Ho’s good children”). Each situation or question

was given 3 choices corresponding to the levels: Weak = 1, Medium = 2, Good = 3. The option “other comments” was treated as an alternate value (Missing value) - the intangible value for statistical calculations.

The data were evaluated as follows: For the average degree of orientation for the group of values, the values were classified according to the following: Mean <1.50 - Weak;  $1.50 \leq \text{Mean} \leq 2.50$  - Medium; Mean > 2.50 - Good. Paired-sample t-test was used to classify the significant differences between pre-test and post-test, therefore, there was no need to apply Bonferroni adjustment. SPSS version 16.0 was used for the statistical analyses in this study.

## RESULTS

### *The concept of responsibilities about “good children in the family”*

The comparison of the concept of responsibilities about “Good children in the family” of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from ethnic minority groups in Vietnam before and after the implementation of the informal value education programme is shown in Table 2. In order to find out any significant pre-test–post-test differences between the control and the experimental groups, a statistical analysis was performed with Student’s paired-sample t-test.

Table 2 shows no statistically significant differences for the control group between the pre-test scores and post-test scores in any of the variables. However, statistically significant differences were found for the experimental group in all the dimensions of “good children in the family”: being filial ( $t(37) = 1.10; p < .05$ ), being obedient ( $t(37) = 4.42; p = .001$ ), loving other younger children ( $t(37) = 5.34; p = .001$ ),

respecting and being polite ( $t(36) = 2.37; p < .001$ ), and helping family ( $t(36) = .374; p < .05$ ).

### *The concept of responsibilities about “good students in school”*

Table 3 presents the comparison for the concept of responsibilities about “good students in school” of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from the ethnic minority groups in Vietnam before and after the implementation of the informal value education programme.

Statistically significant differences were found between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores for the experimental group in various dimensions of “good students in school”: honest in studying ( $t(36) = 2.59; p = .001$ ), independent in studying ( $t(37) = 9.41; p < .005$ ), serious during lessons ( $t(36) = 2.74; p < .05$ ), being in solidarity with friends ( $t(34) = 2.96; p < .05$ ), and following the rules of school and class ( $t(35) = 1.22; p < .05$ ). Nonetheless, there was no significant difference in respecting teachers before and after the programme ( $t(35) = 1.44; p > .05$ ) (see Table 3). A statistical analysis was also performed with Student’s paired-sample t-test to find out whether there were any significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores in the control group but no significant differences were found for the control group on any of the variables evaluated.

TABLE 2  
The Concept of Responsibilities about “Good Children in the Family” Before and After the Implementation of the Informal Values Education Programme

Responsibility	Control			Experimental		
	Pre-test	Post-test	<i>t(p)</i>	Pre-test	Post-test	<i>t(p)</i>
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Being filial	2.92 (.273)	2.89 (.413)	1.71 (.096)	2.84 (.370)	2.92 (.273)	1.10 (.024*)
Being obedient	2.97 (.162)	2.86 (.431)	2.74 (.661)	2.92 (2.27)	2.95 (.226)	4.42 (.001***)
Loving other younger children	2.82 (.563)	2.92 (.359)	0.94 (.353)	2.68 (.702)	2.76 (.634)	5.34 (.001***)
Respecting and being polite to older people	2.97 (.162)	2.86 (.419)	1.43 (.160)	2.89 (.311)	2.89 (.311)	2.37 (.000****)
Helping family	2.97 (.120)	2.97 (.164)	1.00 (.324)	2.92 (.359)	2.95 (.226)	.374 (.011*)

Note. \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .005; \*\*\**p* = .001; \*\*\*\**p* < .001

TABLE 3  
The Concept of Responsibilities about “Good Students in School” Before and After the Implementation of the Informal Values Education Programme

Responsibility	Control			Experimental		
	Pre-test	Post-test	<i>t(p)</i>	Pre-test	Post-test	<i>t(p)</i>
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Honest in studying	2.94 (.597)	2.98 (.487)	1.23 (.225)	2.37 (.852)	2.42 (.826)	2.59 (.001***)
Independent in studying	2.91 (.226)	2.95 (.122)	1.43 (.160)	2.79 (.622)	2.89 (.388)	9.41 (.003**)
Serious during lessons	2.86 (.164)	2.95 (.329)	3.44 (.661)	2.87 (.475)	2.89 (.311)	2.74 (.006*)
Respecting teachers	2.86 (.167)	2.94 (.333)	1.36 (.183)	2.74 (.644)	2.74 (.644)	1.44 (1.27)
Being in solidarity with friends	2.87 (.355)	2.80 (.531)	4.63 (.535)	2.47 (.797)	2.61 (.595)	2.96 (.043*)
Following the rules of school, class	2.94 (.232)	2.89 (.398)	8.13 (.422)	2.76 (.590)	2.89 (.388)	1.22 (.030*)

Note. \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .005; \*\*\**p* = .001; \*\*\*\**p* < .001

*The concept of responsibilities about “good children in society” (“Uncle Ho’s good children”)*

Results on the concept of responsibilities about “Uncle Ho’s Good Children” (“Good

Children in Society”) for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from ethnic minority groups in Vietnam before and after the implementation of the informal values education programme are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4  
The Concept of Responsibilities about “Uncle Ho’s Good Children” (“Good Children in Society”) Before and After the Implementation of the Informal Values Education Programme

Responsibility	Control			Experimental		
	Pre-test	Post-test	<i>t(p)</i>	Pre-test	Post-test	<i>t(p)</i>
	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )		Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	
Loving the country	2.89 (.453)	2.99 (.162)	1.71 (.096)	2.89 (.388)	2.89 (.311)	3.10 (.000****)
Protecting the environment	3.00 (.000)	2.89 (.453)	1.43 (1.60)	2.66 (.627)	2.79 (.528)	.927 (.041*)
Loving the people	2.87 (.343)	2.61 (.495)	2.69 (4.10)	2.47 (687)	2.58 (.642)	6.81 (.000****)
Loving to work	2.92 (.273)	2.82 (.457)	1.16 (2.54)	2.79 (474)	2.84 (.437)	5.72 (.001****)
Being modest, honest, brave and virtuous	2.95 (.324)	2.97 (.367)	.274 (7.86)	2.82 (.512)	2.89 (.453)	6.83 (.019)
Keeping personal hygiene	2.97 (.367)	2.82 (.457)	1.47 (3.16)	2.68 (.574)	2.76 (.542)	5.52 (.001****)

Note. \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .005; \*\*\**p* = .001; \*\*\*\**p* < .001

TABLE 5  
The Concept of Responsibilities among 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students from Ethnic Minority Groups in Vietnam Before and After the Implementation of the Informal Values Education Programme

Dimensions	Control			Experimental		
	Pre-test	Post-test	<i>t(p)</i>	Pre-test	Post-test	<i>t(p)</i>
	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )		Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	
Good Children in the Family	2.94 (.124)	2.86 (.195)	1.932 (2.61)	2.85 (.221)	2.89 (.172)	1.34 (.001****)
Good Students in School	2.99 (.153)	2.96 (.196)	1.975 (3.96)	2.67 (.371)	2.70 (.368)	4.67 (.043*)
Uncle Ho’s Good Children (Good children in society)	2.93 (.176)	2.85 (.233)	1.625 (1.13)	2.72 (.353)	2.79 (.304)	7.96 (.035*)
Overall	2.97 (.105)	2.89 (.156)	2.603 (5.73)	2.75 (.233)	2.80 (.247)	6.94 (.034*)

Note. \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .005; \*\*\**p* = .001; \*\*\*\**p* < .001

As shown in Table 4, significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores were found for the experimental group in all dimensions of “good children in society” (“Uncle Ho’s good children”): loving the country (*t*(37) = 5.89; *p* < .001), protecting the environment (*t*(37) = 2.41; *p* < .05), loving the people (*t*(37) = 5.51; *p* < .001), loving to work (*t*(37) = 5.48; *p* < .001), being modest, honest, brave

and virtuous ( $t(37) = 6.78; p < .001$ ), and keeping personal hygiene ( $t(37) = 3.59; p < .005$ ). Nonetheless, no statistically significant differences were found between the pre-test and post-test scores in the dimensions of “good children in society” (Uncle Ho’s good children) for the control group.

Results on the general comparison of the concept of responsibilities between the control group and the experimental group for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from ethnic minority groups in Vietnam before and after the implementation of the informal value education are shown in Table 5. The differences between the pre-test and post-test scores were assessed in the experimental group on all the dimensions that evaluated Good Children in the Family ( $t(37) = 1.34; p = .001$ ), Good Students in School ( $t(37) = 4.67; p < .05$ ), Uncle Ho’s Good Children (Good children in society) ( $t(37) = 7.96; p < .05$ ), as well as on the overall three dimensions ( $t(37) = 6.94; p < .05$ ), but no significant differences were found in the control group.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Among the 17 responsibilities, only one responsibility had no significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group; i.e. respecting teachers. Why did the concept of 5<sup>th</sup> students in the experimental group on this responsibility show no significant improvement? We believe that this study confirms the strong effects of the traditional factors in Vietnamese education on citizens. In almost all primary schools in

Vietnam, the phrase, “Tien hoc le, hau hoc van” (Learn the moral principles first, then learn the knowledge), is typically displayed in a large red banner at the main entrance and this slogan plays an important role in moral teaching and learning in school. This Chinese-Vietnamese saying implicitly means that the very first thing which should be learnt in school is proper manners in human relations, while knowledge and language are secondary (Doan, 2005). In addition, the Vietnamese culture strongly believes that teachers are more important than parents in educating children, and that the more parents and their children respect teachers, the better chance for the children to improve. In short, there was no improvement on the responsibility “respecting teachers” because teachers are already highly respected by children.

The results show that the informal value education programme gave rise to significant differences in the experimental group in almost all concepts of responsibilities. Therefore, the informal value education programme is suitable for working with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade ethnic minority students. It is suggested that, some adaptations on the part of the school “Literacy space: a story for every day”; “Extracurricular activities for primary students at school with various values education topics”; “Games and dancing or singing groups by topics such as pride in homeland and country, loving teachers, friendship, school, family and so on”; “Corner of beautiful words” could possibly be incorporated into the curriculum in the primary schools.

In Vietnam today, there are two different systems of morality: the traditional morality and socialist morality. While the traditional morality is transmitted through informal channels such as family socialisation and daily interactions, the socialist morality is enforced through the formal channels of the national education curriculum. However, it is still a real challenge for the Vietnamese educational system to find a suitable and effective method of moral education in order to cope with the complexity of a fast-changing society (Doan, 2005). Moreover, the increase in new social problems (divorce, child abuse, drug addiction, power abuse and corrupt governance), people are worried and they question the role and outcomes of moral education in the formal curriculum. Although the values of traditional morality are still held in high esteem by the public and are expected to have an increasing role in the formal curriculum (Doan, 2005; Duong, 2000; Nguyen, 2005), the need to find a new method for moral education so that moral teaching and learning will deal closely with students' daily life is becoming more urgent.

Through 4 units: "Literacy space: a story for every day"; "Extracurricular activities for primary students at school with various values education topics"; "Games and dancing or singing groups by topics of such as pride in homeland and country, loving teachers, friendship, school, family and so on"; "Corner of beautiful words", the informal values education programme used has created better moral

transmission in two dimensions: promoting moral instruction and encouraging moral behaviour by deliberate attempts and moral practice. This informal value education also helps establish a link between cognitive reflection on values and effect so that values can become part of the process of living and awareness and can become integrated and effective in regulating behaviour. By transmitting the content of value education indirectly and addressing a connecting process of the person's configuration and their own system of personalised values, this informal value education encourages the participants to become positive recipients of values education and key actors in their own process of discovering, living and internalising values (Hao, 1992; Jackson *et al.*, 1993; Soriano *et al.*, 2011). One of the most important advantages of this informal values education is that it is designed to help primary school students from the ethnic minority groups to overcome their shyness and become more active in learning. "Learning by playing and playing for learning" is the natural and effective way for teaching and learning not only values but also science for children (Hao, 1992; Thornberg, 2008).

Including informal values education programme in the school curriculum would help 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from the ethnic minority groups to see school differently, not as a source of stress and far from their interest. In addition, value orientation and the concept of students' responsibilities are formed and expressed through their behaviour, attitude and activities in daily

life at school, so that informal education has a great impact in bringing value education into the day-to-day interactions between teachers and students and between students. Hence, the process of developing the concept of responsibilities in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from the ethnic minority groups in Vietnam would happen more naturally and effectively.

The limitations of the present study should be highlighted. Social desirability might have influenced the children's responses while answering the questionnaire. Children had to answer "what will you do?" in each of the situations given. They might have been confused about what they really did and what the society expected them to do. They might also know the expected and right things to do but they might not do them in real situations. Therefore, some children might have answered the questions based on what they were taught in order to meet societal expectations, while others might have answered based on what they really did. Future research should include more objective measures of the moral thought and behaviour, apart from exploring the concept of responsibilities among children. All in all, exploring children's moral thought and behaviour can help determine the impacts of experimental programmes on children's values-related behaviour.

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