



Inculcation of the knowledge of nature and society in Vietnamese children through Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội)

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Abstract

This article aims to study the inculcation of the knowledge of nature and society in Vietnamese children through Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội), which is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Training (BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO). The historical method was employed in this study. Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội) is the main source to explore. The study shows that to develop Vietnamese society, the government instills the knowledge of nature and society (Tự nhiên và xã hội) into children so that they are aware of the importance and the value of the existing natural environment. The children also have taught about Confucianism, the cornerstone of social practice (xã hội) to take responsibility for their duties in their family and society.

Keywords: children, textbook, inculcation of the knowledge, nature and society, Vietnam



Introduction

Vietnam or the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a socialist state where the government pays much attention to the development of people's abilities, especially on education under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Training (BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO). It aims to develop children to be knowledgeable and capable of reading and writing well in both Vietnamese and English as well as being able to apply the skills learned from educational institutions to daily life. The Vietnamese government focuses on the development of a society that must be on par with international development. There are 6 basic courses for Vietnamese children in primary school—Vietnamese language, mathematics, morality, arts, physical education and nature and society (Hathairat Munart, 2006). It can be seen that out of 6 are the courses that reflect the importance of living in society such as Vietnamese language, morality and nature and society. This is the starting point of cultivating knowledge and building basic understanding in children who have recently had social experienced the outside of their home.

Inculcation of the knowledge of nature and society (Tự nhiên và xã hội) is what the Vietnamese government values and focuses on. Children are required to learn about the nature that exists in Vietnam and socialization because at this age, they are not yet eligible for studying in school. They are taught by family members such as parents and grandparents. Therefore, the family is the first society where children are encouraged to learn and absorb the way of life from their parents. Later, when they grow up, they have to learn more than what the family can teach. Next, it is the duty of school to support and teach children with the knowledge contained in the textbooks. Also, children will be encouraged to learn both theoretical and practical matters from the events that they encounter in daily life.

As the Vietnamese government pays much attention to nature and green space in the country so they inculcate the knowledge about the nature into the children. Childhood learning will never end, especially, during the time that young people experience and learn the value of nature that exists in society. This will encourage them to appreciate the importance of nature. When the children grow up in harmony with nature, they will cherish and acknowledge the existence and the importance of nature which is worth for preservation.

Therefore, the authors are interested in how the knowledge of nature and society can be inculcated through Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội) in Vietnamese children in order to understand how the inculcation of the knowledge of nature and society in Vietnamese children works as well as to provide knowledge about the inculcation of the knowledge of nature and society that appears in Nature and Society Textbook)Tự nhiên và xã hội(.

Basic education background, book structure, and the importance of nature, environment, and society in Vietnam

1) Basic education background in Vietnam

Basic education in Vietnam is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Training (BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO). There is a 5-4-3 compulsory education policy, that is, 5 years of primary education (Grades 1-5), 4 years of secondary education (Grades 6-9), and 3

years of high school education (Grades 10-12), a total period of 12 years (Sunthron Kohtbantau, 2015). Students have to study about nature and society (Tự nhiên và xã hội) from Grade 1 to Grade 3. It is to instill basic knowledge about nature and society (Tự nhiên và xã hội) to Vietnamese children.

Inculcation of the knowledge of nature and society (Tự nhiên và xã hội) is partly a result of Confucian teachings in Vietnam that encourage Vietnamese children to be educated by their parents or family members so that children will have good behavior, patriotism, patience, diligence and determination in study as well as living in harmony with the environment created by nature. They will also absorb the concept of living from their ancestors. The essence of Confucianism in Vietnam focuses on gratitude, along with learning about nature. The most important thing is to be grateful to the benefactors, starting with respecting the benefactors in the family such as parents and grandparents first. If not, their life would not be good. Also, children should know the value of nature because it is the creator of a way of life. As a result, the Vietnamese society emphasizes the importance of gratitude and respect for adults as well as the care and conservation of natural resources (Office of Thai Trade Center, Ho Chi Minh City, AEC Business Support Center, 2019).

Moreover, it is a result of the “Five Precepts of Uncle Ho”: 1) love the Fatherland and compatriots, 2) study and work well, 3) maintain hygiene, 4) have good unity and discipline and 5) be honest, courageous, and modest. These precepts have been passed on from grandparents to grandchildren. In addition to being taught by family members, the “Five Precepts of Uncle Ho” are also presented through the media by the Vietnamese government. These precepts are very important so that they have been announced in educational institutions and important places. The government places educational institutions in the top priority, just second only to social institutions, as family institution because the goal of the Vietnamese government is to improve people’s quality of life to have basic knowledge to apply in daily life, but the good teachings that have been passed down from generations of grandparents must also be maintained. Thus, Nature and Society (Tự nhiên và xã hội) is included as a basic compulsory subject for primary school children in Vietnam.

2) Structure and content outline of Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội), Volume 2



Source: <https://loigiaihay.com/tu-nhien-va-xa-hoi-lop-2-c473.html>

Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội), Volume 2 is under the collection of the Ministry of Education and Training (BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO) and published by NHÀ



XUẤT BẢN GIÁO DỤC VIỆT NAM. It is for Grade 2 students. There are 35 units: 10 units are about human body and health; 13 units are about society, and 12 units are about nature. The exercises consist of observing and answering questions, reading and answering questions, learning from games, drawing, and practicing. All of these are embedded in the content of each unit as follows—unit 1: Muscular Movement (Cơ quan vận động), unit 2: Skeleton (Bộ xương), unit 3: Musculoskeletal System (Hệ cơ), unit 4: What to do for Good Bone and Muscle Development? (Làm gì để xương và cơ phát triển tốt?), unit 5: Digestive Organs (Cơ quan tiêu hoá), unit 6: Digestion (Tiêu hoá thức ăn), unit 7: Eat and Drink well and Sufficiently (Ăn uống đầy đủ), unit 8: Healthy Eating and Drinking (Ăn, uống sạch sẽ), unit: 9 Prevention of Worm Disease (Đề phòng bệnh giun), unit 10 Review: Human Body and Health (Ôn tập): (Con người và sức khỏe), unit 11: Family (Gia đình), unit 12: Household Appliances (Đồ dùng trong gia đình), unit 13: Keep the Environment around the House Clean (Giữ sạch môi trường xung quanh nhà ở), unit 14: Prevention of Poisonous Substances at Home (Phòng tránh ngộ độc khi ở nhà), unit 15: School (Trường học), unit 16: School Members (Các thành viên trong nhà trường), unit 17: Prevention of Accidents at School (Phòng tránh ngã khi ở trường), unit 18 Practice : Keep the School Clean and Beautiful (Thực hành: Giữ trường học sạch, đẹp), unit 19: Road Traffic (Đường giao thông), unit 20: Travel Safety (An toàn khi đi các phương tiện giao thông), unit 21: Life around Us (Cuộc sống xung quanh), unit 22: Life around Us (continued) (Cuộc sống xung quanh (tiếp theo)), unit 23 Review: Society (Ôn tập: Xã hội), unit 24: Where Do Trees Live? (Cây sống ở đâu?), unit 25: Some Plants Live on Land (Một số loài cây sống trên cạn), unit 26: Some Plants Live in Water (Một số loài cây sống dưới nước?), unit 27: Where Do Animals Live? (Loài vật sống ở đâu?), unit 28: Some Animals Live on Land (Một số loài vật sống trên cạn), unit 29: Some Animals Live in Water (Một số loài vật sống dưới nước), unit 30: Identify Species of Plants and Animals (Nhận biết cây cối và các con vật), unit 31: The Sun (Mặt trời), unit 32: The Sun and Directions (Mặt trời và phương hướng), unit 33: The Moon and Stars (Mặt trăng và các vì sao), and unit 34 – 35 Review: Nature (Ôn tập: Tự nhiên).

Inculcation of the knowledge of nature and society through Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội)

From the study, it can be seen that the content of Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội), Volume 2 for Grade 2 students is mostly in the same direction. Knowledge is provided in the form of short texts. Emphasis is placed on doing exercises with illustrations so that students can practice observing, thinking, analyzing, reviewing and following the instructions. The textbook consists of 2 categories: 1) Nature (Tự nhiên) and 2) Society (Xã hội).

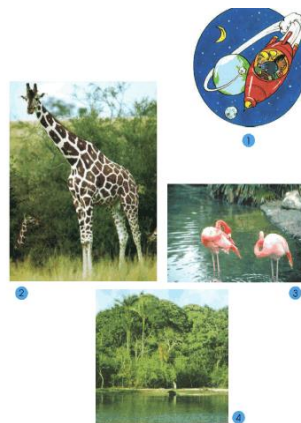
From the study of Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội), it can be seen that the Vietnamese government focuses on teaching children about the nature of their bodies and taking care of their own health first. This can be seen from the arrangement of the content of human body and health (Con người và sức khỏe) from unit 1 to unit 10. The next priority is society (Xã hội), from unit 11 to unit 23, and the last priority is nature (Tự nhiên), from unit 24 to unit 35. The authors assumed that the format of the textbook is arranged this way because the Vietnamese government recognizes the importance of self as the first priority. Therefore, learning about the

human body and health is in the first place of the lesson. Once students have the knowledge and ability to take care of their own body and health, they will have the responsibility for the surrounding society as shown in the textbook, namely family and school. After learning to socialize, they must observe things around, resulting in knowledge and understanding of the plants and animals in the nature of Vietnamese society that should be known and worthy of conservation.

In the textbook, the inculcation of the knowledge of nature and society (Tự nhiên và xã hội) in each aspect can be presented as follows:

Inculcation of the knowledge of nature (Tự nhiên)

For the inculcation of the knowledge of nature in the textbook, nature is categorized into two main subjects: 1) Human Body and Health (Con người và sức khỏe) and 2) Nature (Tự nhiên). The content is provided from Unit 1 to Unit 10 and from page 4 to page 15. It is to teach about the body function process to see the importance of the body system and to learn about self-care. This is based on the “Five Precepts of Uncle Ho” (Ho Chi Minh a former President of Vietnam) that people still respect and adhere to which is about maintaining hygiene. The inculcation of the knowledge of the human body aims at the children perceiving that the system of their own body is important, so they will have self-responsibility. When having self-responsibility, they will have responsibility for other things subconsciously. For the second point, from page 16 to page 17, it is to teach that food is good for the body so that children will recognize the value of food. The third point, from page 18 to page 20, is to teach children how to eat food in a hygienic manner for their good health. The fourth point, from page 49 to page 63, is to teach the nature of plants both on land and in water as well as land and aquatic animals. From page 64 to page 68, children will be taught about the importance of the sun and the moon which are the sources of light, stars and direction. So, they will recognize the value of nature because nature is the creator of everything for humans. For this reason, humans have to use it worthwhile and maintain it for sustainability) *Tự nhiên và xã hội*, 2019, 4-22 and 49-66(.



Source: *Tự nhiên và xã hội 2* (năm 68), by HỒNG KỶ - TRẦN ĐỨC LỢI and TÀO THANH HUYỀN - BÙI QUANG TUẤN

From the study of the matter of nature in *Nature and Social Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội)*, it reflects that the government wants to provide Vietnamese children with access to basic



knowledge at an international level. Therefore, scientific knowledge has been applied to improve the content regarding the existing lessons. In addition, because the topography of Vietnam is a mountain range between river basins and seas, it is important to teach children about nature. For example, children are taught to observe the characteristics of trees, plants, and animals and analyze their habitats. Therefore, they know the plants and the animals that are in the surroundings of their home and are able to distinguish which plants are useful for cooking or have medicinal properties that can be used for medical treatment. They can also learn about some plants that have sharp spines or thorns and are poisonous so they will not play nearby the area. For animals, children will learn about the animals that are pets which can be approached, and wild animals that should be in the forest, zoo, or conservation park that should not be approached in order to prevent harm to themselves. In addition, the government has also recognized the importance of hygienic care in children according to child growth standard from birth to the age of 5 of the World Health Organization in 2006. Therefore, hygiene care has been instilled into children to grow up to be healthy. The government wants Vietnamese people to be healthy because there are still numerous shortcomings in the health system of Vietnam that need to be addressed. As a result, it is necessary for the government to encourage people to take care of their own health and hygiene. This reflects that the Vietnamese government does not only concern about the nature in Vietnamese society, but also recognizes that children in the future will be the main force of the country. Therefore, children are

taught to concern about the nature that must be used worthily. They are also taught about hygiene in daily life which will be the knowledge throughout their life.

Inculcation of the knowledge of society)Xã hội(

Inculcation of the knowledge of society (Xã hội) gives children a foundation or guideline for adaptation to the environment. In the textbook, the first point, which is family, is mentioned from page 24 to page 25. Family is the first society that children have to meet. It is an institution that allows children to know their own and family member and learn how to interact with family members. In addition, the teachings about family also appear in the “Five Percept of Uncle Ho” and the doctrines of Confucianism. Next, it is about environmental protection, which is from page 28 to page 31. It is important to teach children to keep clean and improve the area around the house as it is one of the responsibilities that children should have. Then the school matters are mentioned from page 32 to page 39. School is considered to be the second most important institution in teaching children to know their duties in addition to being a member of the family. Everyone is taught in school to know their duties. Next, it is about traffic. Lastly, it is about the the social issues that surround children, presented from page 40 to page 47. Children learn about the social issues around them in order to adapt themselves and have a way of life according to their social and housing conditions. It is necessary to teach children how to observe the social conditions around them in order to continue their daily life)Tự nhiên và xã hội, 2019, 23-48(.



Source: Tự nhiên và xã hội 2 (năm 48), by HỒNG KỶ - TRẦN ĐỨC LỢI and TÀO THANH HUYỀN - BÙI QUANG TUẤN

According to the study of the social content in Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội), it was found that the Vietnamese government has instilled into all the children their own duties within the family, so they are able to think critically that each family member has different duties and each family member should be respected, especially older adults. Vietnamese society stresses the importance of showing respect for elders because they are the ones who care and teach children how to live today. This is consistent with the doctrines of Confucianism of gratitude to the benefactors or to whom we have the greatest respect. The government, therefore, has to instill into children the respect and responsibilities of everyone starting from the members in the family that is the first institution that children know in society. Next, children are taught to use household appliances properly, such as using them with care, not touching dangerous things or something suspected of being poisonous for the most efficient use. Therefore, teaching how to use household appliances through a textbook makes all the children aware of the value of household appliances. They will know how to use and maintain them and keep them neatly. This is the beginning of teaching children to take responsibility for things other than themselves. Subsequently, they will know how to conserve the environment and keep it clean. This lesson corresponds to the lessons teaching about hygiene and food because not only ourselves should be clean, but the area around the house should be as well. If the house is not clean, it may cause diseases that are from garbage or dust that directly affect children who do not have strong immunity as adults. It is also the protection against dangers caused by the mess around the house, such as the presence of dangerous animals lurking in the grass or the growth of thorns that can be dangerous to children if not eliminated. Next, children are taught about the dangers that can happen at home, such as using generic drugs at home by themselves. In this lesson, children are taught to tell adults when they want to use chemicals or generic drugs at home for safety. Children should not be used these substances by themselves as it could be life threatening. In addition, children are instilled in the school to know their duties, starting from teaching children how to use different rooms available in the school because children have to learn the structure of the school before entering a new society that is not a family. They will also be taught to know the school members because when entering a new society, of course, adaptation is needed. It is also a good idea to learn about the members of new society. Therefore, there is a lesson that teaches children about the school members. When the



school members need help, children can do it because they know the members and their duties in the school. After that, children learn how to protect themselves from accidents that can happen in the school. They are taught to be aware of safety when they are in various places and to behave in school because each place has its rules and regulations that must be respected. Finally, it is to instill in children the knowledge of life around them. For example, they learn about the road traffic symbols so that they know how to use the road safely. Therefore, it is necessary to teach children about road and traffic signs. Next, they have to know about the vehicles used to travel on land, in water and in the air. For this reason, children can think critically about traffic in Vietnamese society, such as what vehicles should be used and which vehicles should be used for each trip. They can also consider the safety of traveling both for themselves and those around them. They are also taught to be careful of dangers from traveling every time. The last lesson for society is observing life around them. This lesson reflects that the government wants children to learn and observe Vietnamese way of life so that they can realize that their society is a good way of life that is worth learning.

Conclusion

From the study of Nature and Society Textbook (Tự nhiên và xã hội), Volume 2, it can be seen that this textbook teaches Vietnamese children in Grade 2 with the knowledge about nature and society under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Training (BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO). The government's goal is to enhance and improve the quality of society. So, the government must strengthen knowledge and understanding of the physical nature that exists in society. It is to strengthen scientific knowledge that is universal to be basic knowledge that can be applied in daily life, and to enhance the ability of children to learn to live in harmony with the people in society by taking responsibility for their duties and respecting for others. Confucianism and Ho Chi Minh's teachings have been added to the lessons of nature and society to make children realize the importance of social institutions that are life guidance.

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