MORAL EDUCATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION – CURRENT SITUATION AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract:

In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, high school students have opportunities to access knowledge and develop skills through technology. Yet, they also face ethical risks as the online environment entails potential dangers. In reality, the current moral education curriculum remains overly theoretical and lacks practical elements; parents and society are not adequately equipped to provide proper guidance, while teachers lack the necessary skills and tools to teach digital ethics. Additionally, the legal framework for protecting children in the digital space is still incomplete. To address these issues, it is essential to innovate the moral education curriculum by incorporating essential digital skills; families and society should play a more active role in guiding students; teachers need further training in digital ethics and better teaching tools. Strengthening the legal framework will also help students develop comprehensively, fostering awareness and responsibility in the digitalized environment.

Keywords: moral education; Fourth Industrial Revolution; online risks; comprehensive development

1. Introduction

In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, high school students in Vietnam have greater access to technology and digital knowledge sources, enabling them to develop self-learning abilities and creative thinking. However, the online environment also presents ethical risks, as students may be exposed to inappropriate content or distorted values without proper guidance. This situation necessitates urgent moral education to help students develop well-rounded personalities and cultivate a sense of responsibility in the digital space.

This study focuses on analyzing the current state of moral education in high schools, including curriculum content, the supportive role of families and society, and

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the capacity and tools available to teachers. At present, moral education programs remain heavily theoretical and lack practical applications, while parents and society do not have sufficient knowledge and tools to provide proper guidance. Teachers also face challenges due to a lack of training in digital ethics and insufficient teaching resources. Additionally, the legal framework for protecting students online remains inadequate to prevent digital threats.

2. Research Methods

The study employs various research methods, including historical methods, logical methods, analytical methods, document synthesis, and the inheritance of research findings from organizations and scholars.

3. Research Results

3.1 The Current State of Moral Education for High School Students in the Context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

3.1.1 The Multifaceted Impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on Students' Awareness and Behavior

Early and frequent access to technology has led to positive changes in how students acquire knowledge. The internet allows them to expand their learning beyond the classroom, fostering self-study skills and enhancing critical thinking. According to the Ministry of Information and Communications (2020), 68% of high school students in Vietnam use the internet daily, enabling them to search for and learn new knowledge and boosting creativity and confidence in their studies.

However, alongside these benefits, the online environment also poses significant risks, as inappropriate content can influence students' moral perceptions. Approximately 22% of students report exposure to violent or offensive content, while 15% have engaged in negative online behaviors, such as cyberbullying or sharing false information (Nguyen & Pham, 2021). These statistics highlight that without proper guidance and digital moral education, students can easily adopt distorted values, negatively affecting their ethical development.

3.1.2 Limitations in the Current Moral Education Curriculum and Teaching Methods

The current moral education curriculum is predominantly theoretical and has not maximized its potential for real-world application. The Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences (2021) reports that 78% of teachers still rely on traditional teaching methods and lack practical activities or in-depth discussions. This makes moral education seem rigid and disconnected from real life, leading to reduced student interest and lower learning effectiveness.

Furthermore, the curriculum lacks content on handling digital situations. A survey in Ho Chi Minh City revealed that 83% of students had never been taught how to verify

online information or deal with cyberbullying (Tran, 2021). This significant knowledge gap leaves students vulnerable to online threats and reduces the effectiveness of moral education in the digital age.

3.1.3 The Ineffective Role of Families and Society in Moral Education

Families play a crucial role in shaping students' moral perceptions and behaviors, yet many parents lack the knowledge to guide their children effectively. A survey by the Center for Education and Communication found that 62% of parents struggle to control their children's online content consumption (Pham & Le, 2020). Insufficient parental supervision increases the risk of students being influenced by misleading online content, significantly impacting their character development.

In addition, society is also an important source of influence, but modern media messages, especially on social networks, often have a counterproductive impact, leading to misconceptions about moral values. A study by the Institute for Family and Children Research (2021) found that approximately 30% of students are exposed daily to content promoting materialistic lifestyles or negative values on social media, affecting their thinking and behavior. This indicates that when families and schools fail to coordinate closely in education, unhealthy societal values may prevail, making students more susceptible to distorted standards.

3.1.4 Challenges in Assessing and Improving Students' Moral Behavior

Current realities show that schools face many challenges in assessing students' morality due to the lack of objective and appropriate measurement tools. According to the Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences (2021), 68% of teachers find it difficult to accurately evaluate students' moral behavior due to the absence of supporting assessment systems, especially concerning online behavior. Relying on personal judgment often leads to biased evaluations, making it challenging to determine each student's moral development level.

The lack of objective measurement tools also means that schools and parents struggle to identify early signs of students' deviant behaviors. Only about 12% of schools have systems for monitoring students' online behavior, reducing the ability to intervene and provide timely support when students encounter negative situations online (Nguyen, 2022). The inability to track early warning signs disrupts the moral education process and diminishes its effectiveness.

3.1.5 Limitations in Teachers' Competence and Digital Ethics Education Tools

Technology offers teachers opportunities to innovate teaching methods, making moral education content more engaging and easier to absorb. According to the Ministry of Education and Training (2020), 27% of teachers have incorporated technology into moral education, enhancing student interaction and engagement, which improves learning outcomes.

However, most teachers lack the skills and knowledge regarding digital ethics, making it difficult to convey moral values appropriately in the modern age. Only 10% of teachers have received training in digital ethics education, leading to significant limitations in teaching (Nguyen & Le, 2021). The lack of teaching materials and supporting tools further restricts teachers' creativity in designing engaging and effective learning activities, resulting in students not fully understanding the role of ethics in the digital era.

3.1.6 Negative Consequences of Uncontrolled Technology Use by Students

When properly managed, technology can help students develop communication skills, expand social connections, and improve soft skills. According to a survey by the Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences, 60% of students found that social networks help them learn and connect with friends in a positive way.

However, uncontrolled use of technology leads to many negative consequences.

According to the Vietnam Institute of Psychology (2020), 44% of students spend more than three hours daily on social media, and 23% report frequent stress due to social media pressure. The lack of self-regulation skills also makes students more likely to engage in negative behaviors such as cyberbullying and spreading false information, affecting not only their morality but also their mental health. Overreliance on technology also reduces students' ability to engage in face-to-face communication and develop essential social skills, making it harder for them to build relationships in real life.

3.1.7 Limitations in Policies Protecting Students in the Online Environment

Currently, some policies have been enacted to protect children in the digital space, providing a legal framework to shield them from harmful content. Measures such as requiring internet service providers to control content for children have somewhat reduced the risk of students encountering inappropriate materials (Ministry of Information and Communications, 2021).

However, the legal system is still not comprehensive or detailed enough, lacking specific regulations on child protection in cyberspace. Only 15% of current online safety regulations are specifically designed for children, and most schools still struggle to implement measures to protect students from online risks (Children Protection Center, 2021). Weak policies have made online student protection ineffective, negatively impacting students' mental well-being and moral awareness in the digital age.

In summary, the Fourth Industrial Revolution offers students many opportunities to develop skills and access knowledge, but it also presents significant ethical challenges. The current situation shows that the education system is not adequately aligned with real-world needs, parents and society lack the necessary tools for guidance, teachers struggle with digital ethics instruction, and legal frameworks remain inadequate. To address these issues, comprehensive solutions must be implemented to help students develop both skills and character, fostering a sense of responsibility in the digital environment.

3.2 Solutions to Improve Moral Education Quality for High School Students in the Context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

- First, improving the moral education curriculum and integrating digital skills. The moral education curriculum needs to be reformed to become more practical, combining theory with practice through common real-life scenarios, especially issues related to online behavior. Designing case studies or practical exercises will help students develop problem-solving skills and self-regulate their behavior when facing situations in the digital environment. Additionally, the curriculum should include essential digital skills such as distinguishing accurate information, responding to cyberbullying, and protecting personal data. This integration will equip students with the necessary knowledge to maintain appropriate behavior and develop a sense of responsibility in the digital world.

- Second, enhancing the role of families and society in moral education orientation. Families need to serve as an essential bridge in moral education by participating in workshops or guidance sessions organized by schools. Parents' awareness of online risks will enable them to effectively supervise and guide their children effectively, helping them avoid inappropriate content and develop self-discipline. Society, including media and community organizations, should also provide healthy, age-appropriate content that helps shape students' moral values. Such content will assist students in developing a positive outlook while encouraging responsible use of social media, thereby creating external support beyond the school environment.

- Third, improving teachers' skills and equipping them with digital moral education tools. To effectively convey moral standards, teachers need in-depth training in digital ethics and strategies for handling online situations students may encounter. These training courses will help teachers better understand online risks and apply effective teaching methods to support students in developing appropriate behavior. Teachers should also have access to diverse teaching materials, such as videos, practical exercises, and instructional guides, to make lessons more engaging. Additionally, online behavior monitoring software can help teachers track and support students' moral development in the digitalized environment.

- Fourth, establish a system to manage and evaluate students' moral behavior. An assessment and monitoring system for moral behavior will help schools detect and promptly address students' deviant behaviors, particularly negative online conduct. This system can record student behavior and encourage positive actions through rewards or reminders, helping students maintain moral standards. Collaboration with parents in the evaluation process is also crucial. Regular meetings between schools and parents will provide opportunities to discuss students' moral development and agree on methods for support and supervision.

- Fifth, improve legal frameworks to protect students in the online environment. To protect students from online risks, clearer legal regulations on child internet safety are needed. The government can introduce policies requiring social media service

providers to strictly regulate content, particularly for children. Additionally, mechanisms should be established to allow students and parents to easily report inappropriate content for timely resolution. Strict penalties should be enforced for violations such as cyberbullying or sharing inappropriate content to ensure student safety. These measures will also raise community awareness and responsibility in the digital space, creating a safe and healthy online environment.

- Sixth, developing students' self-management skills and sense of responsibility. Students need to be trained in self-management skills and understand the consequences of uncontrolled online behavior. Schools can organize discussions, educational film screenings, or life skills activities to help students comprehend the impact of individual actions on the community and build a sense of responsibility in every action. Critical thinking and information analysis skills should also be developed to help students protect themselves from online risks. Lessons on distinguishing between real and fake news, verifying source accuracy, and evaluating information will enable students to access information correctly and strengthen moral awareness, fostering the ability to self-regulate behavior in accordance with social norms.

4. Conclusion

In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, moral education for high school students faces many challenges but also presents significant opportunities. The digital environment allows students to access knowledge and learning tools easily, yet it also carries risks that negatively impact their character and behavior. The reality shows that the current education system lacks practicality, families and society have not fully utilized their guiding roles, teachers lack tools for effective digital moral education, and legal frameworks for child online protection remain incomplete.

To meet the comprehensive development needs of students in the digital era, solutions should focus on improving the curriculum, enhancing teachers' teaching skills, strengthening the role of families and society, establishing an online moral behavior management system, and reinforcing legal protections for children. These measures will not only improve the quality of moral education but also help students develop self-discipline and personal responsibility when engaging in the digital world.

Thus, digital-age moral education requires collaboration among schools, families, and society, along with improving teachers' competencies and refining child protection policies. This collective effort will help cultivate a generation of students who are knowledgeable, ethical, and responsible citizens in an increasingly digitalized society.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Tran Thi Kim Oanh is working at Thu Duc College of Technology, Vietnam; current and former research interests are the fields of political science and history.

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