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Health education in Vietnamese feudal schools: Content and methodology

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Abstract

Vietnamese feudal schools served the purpose of preparing people to manage the country. Educational content and approach were centered on state management attitudes and skills; schools (both state-owned and private - The Master) did not officially offer health education courses. However, the remaining textbooks and learning papers demonstrated that feudal schools prioritized health education, initially incorporating health education content into teaching at all levels. Health education comprised knowledge and skills for maintaining health, as well as creative encounters with Eastern medicine in illness prevention, conservation, and human health improvement. The content and methods of health education demonstrated that medieval schools sought to develop people holistically in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The knowledge and methodology of health education in ancient feudal schools not only help us understand the history of Vietnamese education, but they also provide many lessons acquired in the development of today's educational system.

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Introduction

Vietnam's feudal education system lasted approximately 1,000 years, from the Ly Dynasty's founding of the Temple of Literature in 1076 to the final exam in 1919 (Khanh, 1985) ^[8]. For nearly a thousand years, feudal education served the purpose of preparing people to enter politics and manage and regulate the nation's economy and society. Vietnamese academics have performed numerous studies on the history and values of feudal schooling. The earliest was Khanh (1985) ^[8] researched issues about the functions of feudal education, school organization, teachers, textbooks and teaching materials, the achievements and limitations of feudal education. Next, Tien (1996) ^[17] surveyed the historical process of feudal education with changes in perspectives, policies, content, ways of organizing teaching and learning, and implementing the examination regime. Thang (2005) ^[15], reviewed the history of examinations with the Vietnamese Confucian tradition, and collected information about the rules, processes, and results of feudal education. Bau (1996) ^[1] surveyed the organization, content of education and educational reform under the Nguyen Dynasty. Some other studies also clarified many issues related to the organization and content of feudal education such as: education and examination of Confucianism under Le dynasty through Han Nom documents (Thuan, 1996) ^[16], characteristics of Vietnamese feudal education (Linh, 2019) ^[12], learning regulations and school rules of Vietnam's Confucianism education system (Ha, 2002). The history, viewpoints, content, teaching methods, and values of feudal education were also scattered in a number of studies on Vietnamese history (Giau, 1973; Le, 2011) ^[4], etc. Although it has been received deep attention from academics, until now, there has not been any research on health education in feudal schools. A study on health education will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of feudal schools and feudal education, highlighting Vietnam's educational traditions. This article initially explores health education in Vietnamese feudal schools through content and teaching methods.

2. Research methods and data sources

The article uses the historical educational research method. This is a method that has been proposed and applied for a long time. According to William Richardson (2019), this method has developed in the practice of writing history, both oral and written, since the 1920s. Historians in universities have promoted the method of writing educational history that has become popular globally. Thanks to the use of this method, a historical treasure of education has developed not only in quantity but also in quality, solving many problems that historians of education mention. Terrie and Cinthia (2018) ^[14] also apply and validate the historical educational research method with three conceptual approaches as a framework for historical educational research: disciplinary approach, cultural approach social and historical consciousness. The studies are organized by approach and considered within the categories of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research.

Researching the content and methods of health education in Vietnamese feudal schools is a topic in the field of educational history research. Up to now, Vietnam has not discovered any documents recording or researching health education programs and content in feudal schools. To understand the content and form of education in this field, the article chooses the textbook approach used in feudal schools. Two important booklets still preserved today with health education content are *Bao Sinh dien tho thoat yeu* (Compilation of essentials For Preserving Health And Prolonging Life) and *Ve sinh yeu quyet* (Secret To Staying Healthy). Through accessing, analyzing, and evaluating these two works, the article attempts to describe and highlight the health education content and methods of ancient Vietnamese feudal schools.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Suggestions on the content of health education in feudal schools

Research on the history of feudal education shows that ancient learning regulations were based only on exams as standard, without a time limit or subject division; The curriculum used for teaching was also inconsistent. With the function of training people to do politics, the content of education determined that the root was the training of moral thought, taking morality as the central knowledge. All textbooks and lectures in private or national schools revolved around the motto of training officials. Regular science books were not required for studying and taking exams. Books related to science, mathematics, and geography were taught by each teacher or students found and read on their own (Khanh, 1985) ^[8]. However, while teaching in class, depending on personal capacity and understanding, Buddhist teachers and Confucian teachers sometimes mentioned health education content to students. The *Analects* of Confucius, an important textbook, had been present in every Vietnamese school for nearly a thousand years, with articles related to how to dress and maintain health. According to Le (2003), the *Analects* textbook "copied the words he taught his students and responded to all types of people, there was no issue he did not discuss, from self-cultivation to family discipline and governance national; how to advise parents, how to teach, how to study, how to read books, how to worship, how to treat people with students, with friends, with those above and below, even with the blind, the bereaved; way of his activities at court, at home, in the village, and even

the way he dressed; how to judge people, help people, what they should be like when sitting in a car, what they should be like when entering court, what they should be like when entertaining envoys, and their attitudes when fishing, when shooting birds... In one article, Confucius criticized students for sleeping during the day such as: Tu Du, alias Te Nga, often talkative and boastful but lazy to study and had the habit of sleeping during the day. He scolded: "If the wood is rotten, you can't carve anything. If the wall is made of mud, you can't paint anything on it." Okay. Why do I blame Du for anything else? Then he added: "Before, when I heard someone say it, I believed it that their virtue matches their words, today we suddenly become suspicious, we must observe their actions Do their actions match their words? Because of Du, I changed my attitude like that there" (Le, 2003). In ancient times, sleeping during the day was considered a bad habit. Students who sleep during the day are considered lazy.

Such details about health education are indeed very rare. However, that doesn't mean students and schools don't learn or improve their health at all. Many of the traditional monks and scholars who taught in the countryside were also physicians or good at nursing. Teachers often only taught a group of students for many years, so they had the opportunity to monitor each person, understand each person's psychology and physiology to provide and instruct necessary things such as preserving the body, preventing common diseases. Even though there were teachers who did not teach in the classroom, their way of living and cultivating could still be imitated and followed by students; especially the experiences of protecting the body and maintaining health in changing weather situations (Khanh, 1985) ^[8].

3.2. Health education according to traditional Eastern medicine

The health education curriculum based on traditional Eastern medicine used in teaching in feudal schools that is still preserved today is the book "*Bao sinh dien tho toat yeu*" compiled by Dao Cong Chinh. According to Khanh (1985) ^[8], in 1676, King Le Hy Tong ordered this textbook to be engraved and printed in large quantities "to be distributed everywhere, to serve as a model of hygiene for thousands of generations". This curriculum consists of two parts: the health protection part (protective treasures in daily life) and the longevity part (exercise and health maintenance for a long and lasting life).

In the first part, the textbook collects, summarizes, analyzes and synthesizes many insights from ancient Chinese medical and therapeutic works such as Dao Chan Nhan, Ton Chan Nhan, Tuan Sinh, Dat Sinh... and the body training experiences of Taoists such as Dao Hoang Canh, La Dong Tan, Tran Doan... The curriculum's purpose is to provide ways and methods to preserve health, avoid diseases, and extend longevity, with an emphasis on hygiene, nursing, mental training, relaxation, breathing, massage, nutrition, therapy, and the treatment of some diseases of the human internal organs. The textbook's intended audience includes not only students, but also persons of various ages. The author presents a wealth of illness preventive knowledge and health improvement methods in poetic language, making them easy to read, remember, and put into practice.

For example, when introducing the hygiene and disease prevention methods of Ton Chan Nhan - a famous physician in Chinese history, the textbook is written in poetic form as follows:

*Don't rush to go to bed if you're full or drunk
 Eat when you're hungry and drink when you're thirsty, so
 do it slowly and don't rush
 Eat a little and then eat more later on
 If you eat too fast, you'll be full
 Harming the kidneys and losing vitality, what's the point?
 Grilled, fried/deep-fried foods are eaten while they're hot
 Damaged blood vessels damage teeth
 Go take a shower when you're hungry, comb your hair
 when you're hungry
 Brushing more and bathing less is beneficial for the heart
 Bathing or washing requires hot water,
 The bed and pillows are cold, please don't lie down*

Also in Ton Chan Nhan's method of hygiene, disease prevention, and health improvement, the textbook introduced the *Wring on your pillows* (a embroidered motto on pillowcase to remind oneself what the one should do) to memorize and learn it by heart, also in poetic form:

*Lying and sitting should avoid the wind
 Bathing in a warm place is essential
 Eat until full and go for a walk
 Always use your hands to rub your belly
 Don't eat catfish
 And types of animal meat
 Father's essence and mother's blood
 Is inseparable in the body
 Keep your life long
 Shining like a jade body*

Part two of the textbook discusses month and season-specific approaches for maintaining cleanliness and exercising to boost health. The curriculum for hygiene and health practice by month is fully written for each month, from January to December, and includes thorough directions on what to do, what to abstain from, how to eat, and how to care for yourself during the month. For example, in February, you should "pick unopened peach blossoms and dry them in the shade with strawberries to treat scalp fungus." Take dried peach leaves, pound them, and mix them with well-water to drink in the morning to nourish the intellect; nevertheless, you should avoid staying on wet ground and sweating excessively. In terms of hygiene, disease prevention, and seasonal health promotion, the textbook highlights nursing approaches for the three months of spring, autumn, and winter. The three months of spring are the season of fertility, when heaven and earth are born together and all creatures flourish. The curriculum advises you to get up early, comb your hair, and take a leisurely walk to "reward without punishing" the spring weather. You should comb your hair multiple times each day. Before retiring to bed, bathe your knees and feet with hot water mixed with a little salt. To avoid congested blood vessels, lie down and sleep in an elevated position. In the spring, you should consume sweet fish and limit sour meals to replenish your vitality. Regarding autumn, with the philosophy that everything is collected for maturity, the curriculum guides the knowledge of living in autumn including: the beginning of autumn is the end of summer, the hot air is still fierce, you should not go shirtless in the cool breeze; Food flavors should be less spicy and more sour to nourish the internal organs...

According to today's medical world, this textbook not only exhibits a thorough understanding of Eastern medicine, but it

also provides many valuable experiences from Vietnamese practitioners in practicing, preventing diseases, and promoting health. his textbook was developed in a fairly innovative instructional method at the time.

3.3. Comprehensive health education, combining disease prevention, treatment and physical fitness improvement

The perspective of comprehensive health education, combining disease prevention, treatment, and improving human health belongs to famous physician Le Huu Trac. Documents about the life and career of Le Huu Trac showed that he was the person who has made the greatest contribution to popularizing fitness, hygiene, disease prevention, and practicing to improve health according to traditional Eastern medicine. Typically, the *Ve sinh yeu quyet* is still handed down and has a lot of value for today's life (Hai, 2011) [6]. It is unclear when the textbook was written. Based on his life history and career, Le Huu Trac was born in 1724 and died in 1791. It can be surmised that this curriculum was created around the mid-18th century. This curriculum consisted of 2 parts. In the first part, the author selects some contents of the Bao Sinh Dien Tho toat yeu textbook, including exercises on movement, breathing, massage, stretching, raising arms/legs, and general muscle movements. In the second part, the textbook was written about rules of hygiene, eating habits to protect health in accordance with the living environment and customs and practices of the people, methods of disease prevention, disease control, and health enhancement. The unique feature of this section is that the author wrote six-eight verse form, easy to understand, easy to remember, suitable for many subjects and ages. This part was also known as the secret to maintaining health.

At the beginning of the instructions on preserving, protecting, and improving health, the author presents the purpose, meaning, objects, and goals to be achieved when studying this textbook:

*The rhythm of Essentials of Hygiene
 For young men and women to know
 All my thoughts at that time
 I hope everyone will be free from illness and spring will last
 Nurturing life according to Chan Nhan magic
 The above book had copied several articles verbatim
 Let it depend on the situation and the time
 Feel free to comprehend the words of wisdom
 This book was recast into song
 Some essential words for us to remember
 Included prevention method
 Ancient and modern awareness merges and harmonizes*

Chapter one was about 10 things to remember in protecting and maintaining health:

*Hygiene allows you to maintain your body
 Only health and safety are the key
 Ten basic things are proposed
 One is to work, the other is to rest
 Third, don't go against the weather
 Going through the cold rain, wind and sunshine
 Fourth, don't forget your tastes
 Eyes look lustful, heart forgets normality
 Fifth, it is necessary to guard your feet
 Keep your heart pure so that God can rest in peace
 Sixth, wake up according to the time
 Exercise your body and energy by standing and sitting*

*leisurely
Seventh takes care of drinking and having fun
Being satisfied for a moment makes life shorter
Eighth dietary needs are monitored
But don't overdo it and get a stomach ache
Ninth is to sleep in the right direction
In the direction of vitality (east) the head is higher than the body
Tenth should wash immediately
Even when going out, don't forget the hat on your head
A few things to keep in mind
Keeping the month and day, one hundred years of longevity.*

Chapter three of the textbook advised on nutrition and disease prevention methods. This part was about diet.

*Food hygiene comes first
It is advised to eat frugally, advised to abstain from too much food
Five flavors (5 spicy flavors) must be used carefully
Eating a lot of hazardous food, knowing prevention is good*

Chapter four presented nursing knowledge when sick:

*It's not wrong to be sad and seriously ill
Patients should be advised to relax their minds
The spirit remains strong within
Rest assured that treatment will help you heal quickly
Chapter five presents knowledge about healthy food use:
After the baby learns to crawl
Eat a lot of rice flour to harden yourself
Want stomach to be at peace
Eat cereal early so it becomes a habit
Since three months or more
Feeding thin porridge will calm the school
Prevents accumulation of worms
Eat less sweet and fatty foods, take to prevent worms
Lotus seeds and beans should be eaten
Sour and bitter we need to abstain from
Eat less to satisfy your cravings
It's better than overeating, causing bloating
Drinking and eating in moderation needs to be changed
Frugal food is the ultimate medicine
Shrimp, crab and shellfish should be avoided
If you eat it, your stomach will feel cold and you will have fishy stools*

Chapter six presented knowledge about how to move the body to suit the weather of day, night, sun and wind, and the seasons of the year:

*In the past, it was said: get up in the morning and lie down at night
Working every day and resting at night is obeying God's command
It is also a person's discipline
I advise anyone who gets up early, not to sit all night."*

Chapter seven presented knowledge about using clean water, which types of water are clean, which types of water are dirty, and which types of water should not be used:

*One important thing not to forget
What should be done about drinking water?
Do not use field or pond water
Lake water, puddle water, all water is dirty
Chapter eight presented knowledge on protecting*

*livestock and handling pathogens that could be transmitted from livestock to humans:
Food must be covered for protection
Lizards, spiders, ants, and flies fall in
Avoid eating raw vegetables with soy sauce (mold)
Black crows, white dogs are the same fishy species
Do not eat rotten or rancid meat
What's the use of stale spring rolls and dead eels?
The green fruit is poisonous
Diarrhea often occurs suddenly when eating food
Unexpectedly, cassava is poisonous
You should also know how to prevent it*

Chapter nine presents knowledge on infectious disease prevention.

*Vast dense mountains and forests
Ironwood leaves, animal tools, insect corpses
Throughout life, low energy flows continuously
When the sun is hot, the disease becomes severe
Follow the nose and mouth into yourself
The poisonous gas of the blue miasma is so evil
This disease is an unpredictable condition
It's like malaria, but the danger is short-lived
Chapter ten was knowledge about women's diseases:
Women's diseases are different
Regarding menstruation, pregnant women go into labor
After giving birth, my baby is round and round
But after giving birth, you still have to abstain
A few things to remember first
You shouldn't indulge your husband by having too much sex
The fire of desire burns in my heart
Vaginal water is exhausted, red blood also dries
Giving birth to a lot of blood and vaginal discharge
Gradually exhausted water, slowly causing tuberculosis
Too much lust in the room
Usually when left untreated, it is rare*

Chapter 11 presented knowledge of emotional control:

*Look at how many people there are in the countryside
Doing business is simple, playing around is not good
Corn, potatoes, vegetables, and porridge every day
Yet he is healthier than a high-quality person
Because I'm used to normal life
Less worried about offending internal injuries and broken hearts
At dawn, plow and train yourself
Empty field for breathe, the body is plump*

Chapter 12 presented knowledge that preventing disease is better than not getting sick according to ancient experience:

*In ancient times, the words of wise men
There's nothing difficult about treating it when you're not sick
The pain and regret of self-pity
It's no different than when there is chaos and you feel the need to cast a sword*

Chapter 13 presented knowledge of accident prevention:

*Don't rely on power and authority
If people's hearts are not convinced, they will still be in danger in the end
Don't explore with curiosity*

Stand and walk carefully so you don't have to worry about getting injured

Chapter 14 presented knowledge about the use of betel, medicine, wine, and tea:

Discussion on betel, medicine, wine, tea

Used to treat friends happily

Just a daily hospital room

But overusing this harm is also profound

4. Conclusion

Although health education is not a mandatory content, it is also not an integral component of the feudal school curriculum. However, through studying the teaching and learning curriculum, it shows that feudal education attaches great importance to health education; Health education content has gathered ancient health preservation methods and creative experiences of Vietnamese people in disease prevention according to customs and living environment. In particular, the direction of disease prevention, preservation and improvement of health is built on the principles of oriental medicine, in accordance with the characteristics of Vietnamese medicine, in accordance with the viewpoint of preserving full health, taking virtue first. The health education curriculum in Vietnamese feudal schools still has many professional values that are worthy of inheritance and reference for research in Vietnam's school system.

The goal of education, in any era, is to impart knowledge and skills. However, focusing only on knowledge and skills is not enough to build a fully developed person both mentally and physically. A comprehensive person is a person who has been trained in all aspects: intelligence, morality, health, and aesthetics. Education must have a combination of knowledge and skills with ethics, health, and aesthetics to be able to fulfill the sacred mission of education. The issue of health education has not yet been set as a mandatory task by feudal schools. However, in reality, through the curriculum and teaching methods, it has been proven that Vietnamese feudal schools have tried to initially approach the perception of a comprehensive education. The content and methods of health education in schools have aimed at a comprehensive education, from both sides: state management agencies and the people.

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