

INTEGRITY EDUCATION CONTRIBUTES TO COMBATING CORRUPTION IN VIETNAM TODAY

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Abstract: *In the context of the increasingly urgent fight against corruption in Vietnam, integrity education plays a crucial role in raising awareness, moral qualities, and guiding behavioral changes among individuals, especially public servants, regarding anti-corruption efforts. Only when integrity education is implemented strongly and comprehensively can the fight against corruption and the construction of a fair and clean society be achieved, creating a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the country. This paper clarifies the role of integrity education in the current fight against corruption in Vietnam.*

Keywords: *Integrity; corruption; integrity education; anti-corruption.*

Introduction

Corruption is a global negative phenomenon that causes serious impacts on the sustainable development of nations. In Vietnam, corruption is not only a significant barrier to economic and social development, but also a cause of the erosion of public trust in the state apparatus and public institutions. The consequences of corruption are clearly manifested through decreased management effectiveness, the wastage of public resources, increased social inequality, and harm to the country's image and reputation on the international stage.

In response to these challenges, Vietnam has been implementing various measures to enhance the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts. These efforts include building a cohesive and strict legal system, promoting administrative reforms, enhancing transparency in public management, and strengthening oversight and inspection mechanisms. However, alongside technical and institutional solutions, the formation and nurturing of a sound ethical value system within society also plays a crucial role. Integrity education is considered one of the fundamental and long-term solutions, contributing to the development of public service ethics, social responsibility, and the spirit of law enforcement among individuals, especially the younger generation. This is not only an urgent requirement in the national anti-corruption strategy but also a necessary step toward developing a fair, transparent, and sustainable society.

Content

1. Integrity education and anti-corruption

Integrity education is the process of transmitting and forming ethical values and awareness about integrity, transparency, and fairness in the actions and decisions of each individual. Integrity education is not merely the teaching of theoretical knowledge about ethics and law, but also helping individuals clearly recognize social values and the impacts of dishonest behaviors on themselves and the community. Integrity education helps people understand the importance of maintaining ethical qualities in their activities, while developing the self-discipline and responsibility to resist corruption and wrongful acts.

Integrity education plays a key role in forming the ethical foundation for each individual, thus contributing to the creation of a fair, transparent, and healthy society. Through education, values such as honesty, responsibility, transparency, and respect for the law are transmitted systematically and sustainably, helping each person increase awareness, self-discipline, and actively resist negative behaviors, especially corruption. When ethical standards are promoted and widely practiced, the living and working environment becomes clearer in terms of values and proper behaviors, thus providing motivation for the sustainable development of the nation.

In the current context, Vietnamese society is witnessing a rapid increase in social relationships and economic transactions, which leads to the risk of emerging opaque and negative behaviors. Therefore, incorporating integrity education into school curricula, public servant training, as well as community awareness campaigns, is essential. This is not only a preventive measure but also a core factor in forming a culture of integrity throughout society.

According to Clause 1, Article 3 of the 2018 Anti-Corruption Law, “Corruption is the behavior of a person holding a position of power who abuses that position for personal gain.” The fight against corruption is an ongoing and comprehensive process aimed at preventing and combating corrupt acts, safeguarding fairness, transparency, and integrity in all activities of state agencies, organizations, and society. Corruption is understood as the abuse of power by a responsible individual in an organization or agency, for personal or group benefit, causing harm to the interests of the organization, agency, nation, or society. Anti-corruption efforts include measures to prevent corruption early and measures for investigation and handling when corruption occurs. Prevention mainly focuses on creating a clean and transparent work environment, enabling the public and supervisory agencies to monitor the activities of officials and civil servants. In addition, the mass media plays

an important role in exposing corrupt behaviors and putting pressure on authorities to address violations.

Integrity education and anti-corruption efforts are closely interconnected and complementary in building a transparent and sustainable society. In practice, integrity education acts as a root-level preventive solution, contributing to the formation of ethical thinking, nurturing positive life values, and cultivating a sense of responsibility in each individual. Through this, education not only provides knowledge but also builds the right attitudes and behaviors in response to situations that may lead to negative outcomes, especially in public service and state administration. When values such as honesty, fairness, transparency, and responsibility are ingrained in the public's awareness – particularly among officials and civil servants – the risk of corruption will naturally be reduced through self-regulation and conscientiousness. In contrast, without a foundation of integrity education, even the most stringent legal controls will struggle to achieve sustainable effectiveness. Therefore, integrity education must be implemented comprehensively, from schools to public institutions and the community, in order to create a social environment that upholds ethics and civic responsibility, thus enhancing the long-term effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts.

Integrity education not only equips individuals with knowledge about legal regulations on anti-corruption but also provides the necessary skills, attitudes, and qualities to prevent individuals – especially public servants – from being tempted by corruption. When ethical standards are formed through education, public servants will develop the self-discipline to reject illicit benefits and participate in anti-corruption efforts. Conversely, anti-corruption measures also play a role in promoting integrity education, as strong condemnation and severe handling of corruption create a social environment that does not tolerate corrupt behaviors, thus encouraging the development of integrity education programs in schools, agencies, organizations, and units. A clean working and social environment will be a crucial factor in making integrity education more effective, as everyone becomes aware of respecting and protecting ethical values. Therefore, integrity education and anti-corruption efforts are always mutually supportive elements, creating a solid foundation for the sustainable development of society.

2. The role of integrity education in the fight against corruption in Vietnam

Integrity education plays a crucial role in the fight against corruption in Vietnam, particularly in the context of corruption becoming increasingly sophisticated and complex. Its importance is reflected in the following fundamental aspects:

First and foremost, integrity education helps build a solid ethical foundation for each individual, especially for public servants. Integrity education is key to raising awareness and personal responsibility, particularly for officials and civil servants – those who directly exercise state power and serve the people. Through a systematic educational process, learners will better understand the far-reaching harms of corruption on economic and social development, as well as on the trust and stability of government institutions. Understanding that corruption is not only a legal violation but also a barrier to sustainable development will motivate individuals to fight more vigorously against negative behaviors in public service.

In addition to imparting theoretical knowledge, integrity education programs also aim to establish specific behavioral standards, enabling individuals to recognize, appropriately respond to, and reject dishonest acts or benefits – even when under pressure from superiors, colleagues, or personal relationships. Especially, integrity education also contributes to shaping professional ethics, helping public servants be aware of their role as role models, their social responsibility, and professional self-respect. When these standards become part of the civil service culture, they will create a resilient defense against the temptations of corruption and contribute to improving public governance effectiveness.

In Vietnam, a concrete example demonstrating the role of integrity education in building an ethical foundation for public servants is the implementation of anti-corruption training courses within the leadership and management training programs. In recent years, courses for officials in the planning or leadership positions at various levels have integrated content on public service ethics, accountability, and, notably, integrity education in task performance. These topics are not only theoretical but are also illustrated with specific scenarios from management and administration work, helping participants better understand the boundaries between right and wrong, between serving the public interest and abusing power for personal gain. Some localities, such as Quảng Ninh, Đà Nẵng, and Hồ Chí Minh City, have proactively organized thematic sessions on “building an integrity culture within the cadre of public servants” to enhance awareness and professional ethics among grassroots officials. As a result, many officials have actively reported and declined gifts that violate regulations or reported negative behaviors in their agencies, contributing to the creation of a transparent and standardized public service environment.

Secondly, integrity education helps raise awareness about the harms of corruption. Integrity education plays a crucial role in increasing individual

awareness of the severe consequences corruption causes to society, the economy, and the lives of the people. Corruption is not just a legal violation, but also a direct cause of eroding public trust in government, breaking social moral standards, and weakening public institutions. This represents a significant barrier to the country's sustainable development, as it leads to the loss of resources, hinders innovation, and increases social injustice.

Integrity education programs provide learners not only with theoretical knowledge but also help them identify and analyze the specific impacts of corruption in practice. Learners will understand that corruption causes the loss of public assets, weakens the operational capacity of organizations, and leads to the unfair and improper allocation of resources. At the same time, corruption creates severe inequality, making it difficult for disadvantaged people to access basic services such as education, healthcare, or justice. Through fostering awareness and ethical values, integrity education contributes to shaping a generation of citizens with a clear understanding of personal and social responsibility. They not only reject wrongful behaviors but also actively participate in anti-corruption activities and prevention efforts. This shift from awareness to behavior is the core factor in building a society based on integrity, transparency, and fairness.

In recent years, the Ministry of Education and Training has issued guidelines to integrate content on integrity education and anti-corruption into subjects such as Civic Education, Legal Education, and extracurricular activities promoting ethics and civic responsibility. In these lessons, students are introduced to the concept of corruption, common forms of corruption, and the consequences corruption causes to society and individuals, thereby forming a clear attitude towards wrongdoing. Some universities that specialize in law have implemented the teaching of the "Anti-corruption" module as a mandatory subject for law students. During the course, students analyze typical corruption cases in Vietnam to understand the negative impacts of corrupt practices on social trust, justice, and economic development. Internal surveys show that after completing the module, more than 90% of students appreciated the role of integrity education and reported a significant change in their awareness of the harms of corruption.

Thirdly, integrity education helps build effective anti-corruption policies and mechanisms. Integrity education is not only about raising individual awareness but also plays a strategic role in developing and strengthening anti-corruption policies and mechanisms in an effective and sustainable way. During the policy-making process, a deep understanding of integrity values such as transparency,

accountability, and fairness will help managers and legislators better recognize the risks of corruption, allowing them to make more appropriate and reasonable policy decisions.

Based on integrity education, public policies can be designed to minimize the “loopholes” for negative behaviors. Areas prone to corruption, such as civil servant recruitment, licensing, bidding, or budget allocation, will be regulated by transparent, public processes with multi-layered oversight. This not only reduces the potential for personal profit but also enhances public trust in the state governance system.

Furthermore, integrity education is the foundation for building independent and effective oversight mechanisms. Organizations equipped with knowledge about integrity governance will be able to operate strict internal control systems, establish transparent evaluation processes, and create public feedback mechanisms. This not only helps detect negative behaviors early but also creates a clean, professional work environment. More importantly, integrity education promotes active community participation in anti-corruption efforts. When people are fully aware and encouraged to contribute ideas and monitor public activities, policies will reflect real-world situations and become more feasible. As a result, the entire society collaborates to build a transparent political-administrative system, effectively contributing to the prevention and eradication of corruption.

One example that illustrated how integrity education contributed to the development of effective anti-corruption policies and mechanisms was the series of training and capacity-building programs on anti-corruption that had been delivered to officials across the political system. These training courses not only provide legal knowledge on anti-corruption but also emphasize integrity values, public ethics, and accountability in state management. From these training programs, many officials, especially those in inspection, auditing, and public financial management agencies, have applied the knowledge acquired to propose or amend internal regulations, build transparent processes in bidding, public procurement, administrative procedures, and handling complaints.

Recently, several provinces, including Quảng Ninh – where the “electronic government” model has been vigorously implemented along with training programs on integrity and public ethics for management officials – have established transparent mechanisms in administrative procedures, budget allocation, and public investment management. According to local reports, the rate of negative feedback and complaints related to extortion, petty corruption, and abuse of power significantly decreased during the 2020–2023 period. When

officials are equipped with an integrity mindset and a deep understanding of anti-corruption efforts, they will have the capacity to design, implement, and monitor policies more effectively.

3. Key solutions to promote the role of integrity education in the fight against corruption in Vietnam

To enhance the role of integrity education in the fight against corruption in Vietnam, several key solutions need to be implemented:

Firstly, strengthening integrity education programs in the national education system

This is an important measure, not only helping to raise awareness about ethical values but also laying a solid foundation for the younger generation to maintain integrity in both work and life. Teaching integrity must be implemented at all levels of education, from primary school to university, in order to instill fundamental principles such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, and transparency. Integrity education programs should be designed in accordance with the psychological characteristics and learning capacities of students at different ages. At the primary school level, integrity education can begin with simple stories and moral lessons about honesty, the importance of speaking the truth, and respecting the law. As students mature, these lessons will evolve into more complex ethical situations, helping them understand the risks and harms of corruption, while also equipping them with the ability to assess and address negative situations in real-life scenarios.

In addition to providing theoretical knowledge, an important aspect of integrity education is the cultivation of specific skills. Programs need to equip students with the skills to refuse unethical benefits, the ability to criticize, and report misconduct, enabling them to actively protect ethical values and the law. These skills not only help them face the temptations of corruption but also encourage them to participate in anti-corruption activities within their communities, contributing to the creation of a cleaner society.

Furthermore, for integrity education to be effective, there must be coordination between family education, school education, and society. The learning environment must be healthy and protect integrity values, while families and society must work together to create favorable conditions for students to learn and practice these values. Integrity education programs should be combined with practical activities such as internships, volunteering, and movements to protect transparency and fairness in the community. Through these activities, students will have the opportunity to apply what they have learned in real life, thus developing sustainable moral qualities and

social responsibility. Integrity education is a continuous process that requires close cooperation between family, school, and society, creating a living and learning environment where integrity values are encouraged and protected, contributing to building a fair, transparent, and sustainable society.

Secondly, continuing training and enhancing the capacity of officials and civil servants in integrity and anti-corruption efforts

Through training and capacity building, officials and civil servants are not only equipped with legal knowledge but also gain a deeper understanding of the harmful effects of corruption on the sustainable development of the country and the community. This training plays a crucial role in forming a team of civil servants who not only understand the theory but also have the ability to perform their duties with high ethics and responsibility. Training programs need to be conducted regularly and continuously to ensure they are updated and effective in enhancing the capacity of officials and civil servants. An important aspect of the training programs is raising awareness about public service ethics, focusing on the principles of integrity and accountability. Processes for monitoring, supervising, and handling corruption should be incorporated into the curriculum so that officials understand the law and are familiar with practical procedures in anti-corruption work. Especially, training courses should focus on developing skills to identify corrupt behavior, allowing officials to detect early signs of ethical violations and take timely action to prevent and address them.

It is important to note that training programs should encourage a sense of voluntary commitment in the fight against corruption starting from daily work practices. Officials and civil servants need to be encouraged to participate in anti-corruption efforts not only because of their professional duties but also due to a voluntary spirit and a commitment to protect transparency and fairness in their work. To achieve this, training programs should create spaces for participants to discuss and analyze real-life situations in their work, helping them better understand the potential risks of corruption in their work environment. Training should not only be theoretical but must be connected to practical work. Officials and civil servants should practice anti-corruption skills in specific scenarios, from implementing concrete anti-corruption actions to resolving issues that arise in daily tasks. These training sessions must help them understand that fighting corruption is a continuous task and an essential part of public administration work.

Furthermore, training programs need to be linked to regular monitoring and evaluation to assess the capacity and ethics of officials and civil servants.

This evaluation not only helps improve the quality of anti-corruption efforts but also promotes transparency and fairness in the activities of public institutions. Public agencies must create mechanisms to monitor the training process and the application of knowledge in practice, ensuring that anti-corruption efforts are deeply embedded and yield sustainable results. By combining in-depth training, practical application, and continuous monitoring, public agencies will create a transparent working environment that minimizes corrupt practices, improves public management efficiency, and protects the interests of the people.

Thirdly, strengthening coordination between agencies and organizations in integrity education

To build an honest society, close cooperation between state agencies, social organizations, schools, and training institutions is a decisive factor. This coordination not only helps in building and implementing integrity education programs but also creates a synchronized education system with a wide-reaching impact, thereby raising public awareness of the importance of integrity in all fields. State agencies play a crucial role in creating the legal foundation and supporting advocacy activities about integrity. They need to actively cooperate with social organizations to promote and disseminate ethical values and integrity in the community. This can be achieved through formal educational programs in schools, but it should also include extracurricular activities such as organizing seminars, discussion forums, media campaigns, and volunteer programs, providing people with opportunities to access knowledge and skills about integrity in their everyday lives.

Moreover, educational institutions need to proactively develop and update training programs on integrity, especially on public service ethics and anti-corruption, to integrate them into the formal curriculum. This should not be limited to theoretical knowledge but should be implemented in various forms, including lectures, real-life situations, visual lessons, and group exercises, helping students understand specific scenarios in anti-corruption work. Training institutions should also cooperate with relevant authorities to ensure the content of this education is implemented properly and effectively.

Social organizations and unions play an important role in monitoring and promoting the implementation of integrity education programs. These organizations, such as women's associations, youth unions, veterans' associations, or non-governmental organizations, can organize activities such as advocacy, launching anti-corruption movements, or participating in integrity knowledge competitions, thereby encouraging the community, especially the younger generation, to become more aware of the value of integrity.

In addition, these organizations can also serve as partners in monitoring the implementation of the programs, ensuring that integrity education programs are truly put into practice. The coordination between state agencies, social organizations, and educational institutions not only helps enhance the effectiveness of education but also creates a powerful support network in forming a community with a high level of integrity awareness. Such a community will play an important role in pushing back corruption, creating a healthy, fair, and transparent living and working environment.

Fourthly, promoting community participation in integrity education and anti-corruption efforts

Integrity education should not only focus on equipping individuals with basic knowledge but also create a strong community movement, where every citizen recognizes their responsibility in detecting, reporting, and preventing corrupt acts. An important goal of integrity education is not only to form personal ethical awareness but also to encourage the active participation of the community in anti-corruption efforts. To achieve this, educational programs must focus on raising awareness about citizens' rights and responsibilities in overseeing public activities. This helps citizens understand that they not only have rights but also obligations to protect transparency and fairness in government decisions and actions.

State agencies and social organizations need to work closely with the media to raise awareness about the important role of the community in detecting corruption. Media campaigns should focus on raising awareness about the importance of reporting corrupt acts, helping the community realize that reporting is not just a duty but also a right of every citizen in protecting the integrity of the state apparatus. These programs should highlight that detecting and reporting corruption can help safeguard societal interests and reduce the risks of negatively affecting the country's sustainable development.

In particular, to encourage citizen participation in the fight against corruption, effective whistleblower protection mechanisms must be established and implemented. Individuals who dare to stand up and report corruption must be ensured safety and protection of their legitimate rights. This is a key factor in creating a favorable environment to encourage courage in detecting and preventing corrupt acts.

Additionally, organizing community monitoring activities, such as inspections and audits at various facilities, also contributes to exerting strong pressure on officials and civil servants to carry out their duties with transparency and integrity. These monitoring activities not only help detect corrupt acts

in a timely manner but also help create a clean working environment where all actions are subject to public oversight. When the community is educated and encouraged to participate in the monitoring process and the fight against corruption, they become an important force in this struggle. Community involvement not only helps detect and prevent corrupt acts but also creates a clean, fair, and transparent society where every individual can live and work in an environment that respects the law and justice.

Conclusion

Education in integrity plays a crucial role in the fight against corruption in Vietnam. Effectively promoting integrity education not only helps raise individual awareness about ethical values but also contributes to the development of strong character, especially among the cadre of officials and civil servants, who are directly involved in managing and executing public service activities. When public officials and employees are clearly aware of the importance of integrity, they will be more proactive in complying with legal regulations and contributing to the prevention of corruption.

Integrity education needs to be implemented strongly and uniformly, from all levels of education to government agencies and social organizations. Only when every individual in society understands their responsibility and duty to maintain fairness and transparency can we hope to build a society with less corruption, laying a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the country.

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