

Integrating Human Rights Education into Moral Education in Vietnam: Foundations and Implementation Measures

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the necessity and feasibility of integrating Human Rights Education (HRE) into Vietnam's primary Moral Education in alignment with MoET Decision 4746 (2022). We map Decision-4746 strands to Moral Education themes and articulate seven classroom-ready measures, together with a five-step lesson-planning process for routine implementation. A descriptive survey of $n = 25$ Grade-4 Moral Education teachers in Bac Giang (Mar–May 2025) used questionnaires and short interviews to document current practice, facilitators, and barriers. Teachers report major obstacles: insufficient instructional time (68%), lack of practical guidance (60%), and incomplete HRE knowledge (52%), alongside constraints related to family understanding (56%), assessment (48%), and resources (44%). The proposed measures—scenario-based cases, rights-focused role-play, experiential mini-projects, structured rights-lens discussion, cross-curricular links, competency-based assessment, and concise teacher guidance with safeguards—operationalize HRE's knowledge–attitude–action triad and translate key rights (participation, non-discrimination, property) into everyday classroom routines. The study contributes a practical mapping table and an implementable toolkit to bridge policy and practice for curriculum developers and teachers.

KEYWORDS - Human Rights Education; Moral Education; Primary education; Vietnam; Competency-based assessment.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, Human Rights Education (HRE) has increasingly become a central orientation of educational systems to build democratic, just, and sustainable societies. Many international scholars affirm that HRE not only provides knowledge about international conventions but also fosters motivation for action, enabling learners to protect their own rights and respect the rights of others [1][2], [3], [4]. In many countries, especially in Europe and North America, HRE has been integrated into general education curricula and has proven effective in shaping positive social attitudes and behaviors, thereby contributing to social justice [5].

In Vietnam, HRE has been considered since the 1990s and was officially institutionalized with a content framework for all levels of education under Decision 4746/QĐ-BGDĐT (2022). At the primary level, the Moral Education subject offers strong potential for integrating HRE, as its content emphasizes the formation of behavioral standards, life attitudes, and basic social skills. The curriculum contains lessons closely connected with human rights, such as Gratitude to Workers, Compassion and Helping Those in Difficulty, Respecting Others' Property, and Children's Rights and Duties. These lessons provide a favorable foundation for naturally and effectively embedding HRE.

Scope note: While this paper addresses HRE integration across Vietnam's primary Moral Education, the empirical evidence is derived from a Grade-4 teacher sample used as a practical window into primary-level classroom realities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, many studies have confirmed the crucial role of HRE in developing global citizenship competencies and promoting social justice. According to Covell, HRE for children, when implemented systematically and comprehensively in schools, can help students become more respectful of others' rights, reduce school violence, and develop social action competencies [6]. Case studies in the UK (the Rights, Respect and Responsibility – RRR program) demonstrated that embedding children's rights into teaching and school management significantly improved students' attitudes, behavior, learning outcomes, and social engagement [5].

In Asia, HRE has gradually been integrated into citizenship and moral education programs, though challenges remain in terms of social awareness, culture, and policy [7] emphasize that integrating HRE in schools requires flexible adaptation to cultural contexts and must avoid becoming a mere slogan without practice. This indicates that for HRE to be effective, it must be closely connected with students' lives through real-life situations, experiential activities, and project-based learning.

In Vietnam, research on Human Rights Education (HRE) remains limited and largely conceptual [8], [9], [10]. Operationalizing HRE within specific subjects—particularly primary Moral Education—remains nascent and requires alignment between the national HRE framework and the 2018 General Education Curriculum. Accordingly, this paper examines the foundations, content, and classroom measures for integrating HRE into Moral Education lessons, with the dual aim of strengthening theoretical grounding and informing practice. While international models (e.g., Rights, Respect and Responsibility [RRR]) show positive effects, actionable guidance tailored to Vietnam's primary Moral Education is still scarce. This paper addresses that gap by providing a mapping table and seven implementable classroom measures.

3. RESEARCH CONTENT

3.1. Theoretical Foundations of Integrating HRE into Moral Education

HRE is theoretically grounded in modern human rights philosophy, which views humans as subjects with inherent, inviolable dignity. Mihr affirms that HRE enables learners not only to grasp legal concepts but also to develop social action competencies, protecting their own rights and respecting others' rights [1]. Bajaj (2011) further argues that HRE should be embedded in schools as a continuous educational process that is experiential and connected with students' daily lives [2].

In Vietnam, Ngo Huy Cuong highlights that human rights are the rights of all people, derived from human dignity and codified in international and national law [8]. Hoang Thi Kim Que adds that human rights include civil–political rights as well as economic, social, and cultural rights, with children being a particularly important group to be educated so they both protect their own rights and respect those of others. These are essential theoretical foundations for implementing HRE within the primary Moral Education curriculum [9].

3.2. Legal and Policy Foundations

Globally, many countries have established HRE policy frameworks, with the United Nations recommending that human rights become part of school curricula starting from the primary level. In the UK, the Rights, Respect and Responsibility (RRR) program, introduced in primary schools, has brought about significant changes in student awareness and behavior [5].

In Vietnam, a milestone was the Ministry of Education and Training's Decision 4746 (2022), which issued the national HRE content framework for general education. At the primary level, the framework emphasizes: (i) children's rights (to study, play, protection, and participation); (ii) basic civil–political rights; and (iii) economic, social, and cultural rights connected with everyday life [11] [12].

This legal foundation is crucial for integrating HRE into Moral Education, ensuring consistency between international requirements and Vietnam's educational context.

In the 2018 General Education Curriculum, HRE is not designed as a separate subject but is integrated into multiple subjects and activities, with Moral Education serving as the fundamental and core component [11] [13].

A comparison between Vietnam's primary Moral Education content and the HRE framework reveals multiple integration opportunities, such as:

- Gratitude to Workers → integrating the right to work and to enjoy the fruits of labor.
- Compassion and Helping Those in Difficulty → integrating the right to assistance, safety, and non-discrimination.
- Love of Labor → integrating the right to age-appropriate labor, the right to study, and self-development.

- Respecting Others' Property – Protecting Public Property → integrating the right to property and the duty to protect shared property.
- Building and Maintaining Friendships → integrating the right to socialize, equality, and freedom of expression.
- Valuing Money → integrating the right to an adequate standard of living and the responsibility of saving.
- Children's Rights and Duties → integrating the full set of children's rights (learning, play, care, protection, participation).

At the primary level, the framework emphasizes three strands: (i) children's rights; (ii) basic civil-political rights; and (iii) economic, social, and cultural rights connected with daily life.

Table 1. Mapping Decision 4746 strands to primary Moral Education themes and teaching measures

Decision 4746 strand	Primary Moral Education theme(s)	Suggested teaching measures
Labor rights; dignity of work	Gratitude to workers; Love of labor	Scenario-based cases; Mini-project "Worker Appreciation Profile"; Rights-lens discussion
Assistance, safety, non-discrimination	Compassion & helping those in difficulty	Role-play (speak up/seek help); Competency-based assessment
Property rights; commons	Respecting others' property; Protecting public assets	Case on lost-and-found; Role-play (borrowing with consent); Action pledges
Participation & expression	Building and maintaining friendships; Class participation	Structured rights-lens discussion; Circle time; Class charter
Adequate standard of living	Valuing money; Smart spending	Saving mini-project; "Smart spending" checklist; Math-Moral co-design
Children's rights set (learning, play, care, protection, participation)	Children's rights and duties	Role-play (bullying/exclusion); Participation scenarios; Reflection pledges

3.3. Practical Foundations

A survey was conducted with a sample of $n = 25$ Moral Education teachers at primary schools in Bac Giang Province, Vietnam, between March and May 2025. Tools included questionnaires and short interviews. The survey focused on: (i) the degree of integration of human rights content; (ii) teaching methods and organizational forms; and (iii) advantages and challenges of integration.

3.3.1. The Degree of Integration of Human Rights Education Content through Moral Education

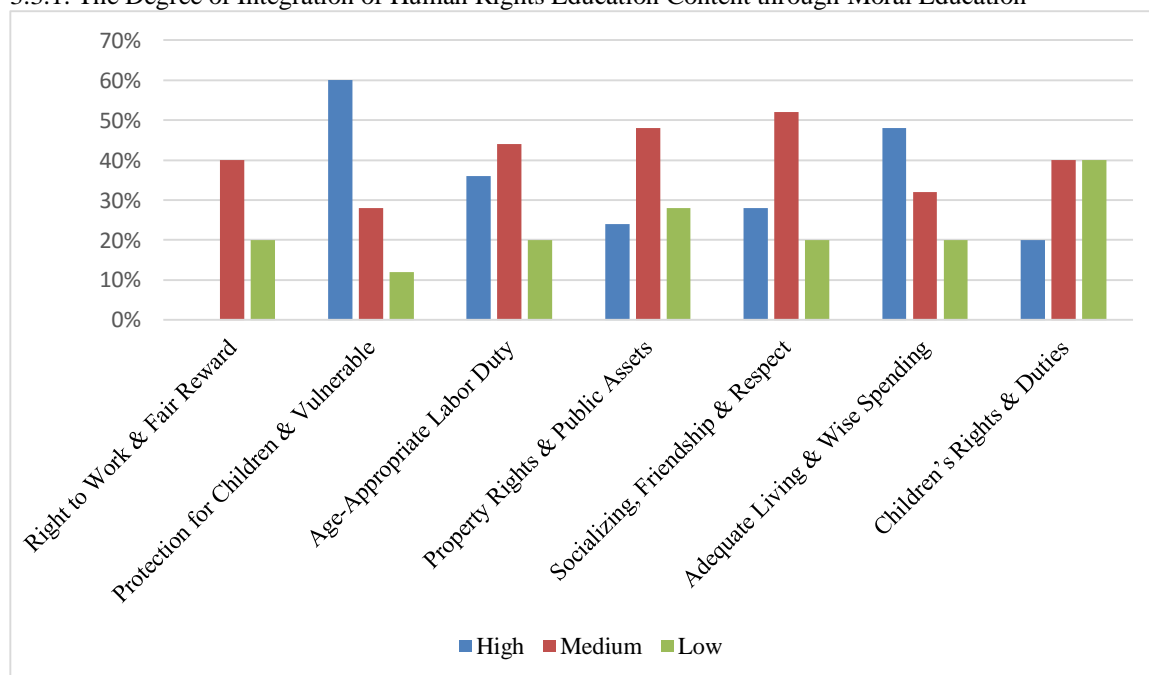


Figure 1. Levels of integration of human rights education content

3.3.2. Methods and formats of Integrating Human Rights Education through Moral Education

A survey on the current use of human-rights-integrated teaching methods in Moral Education produced the following Figure 2:

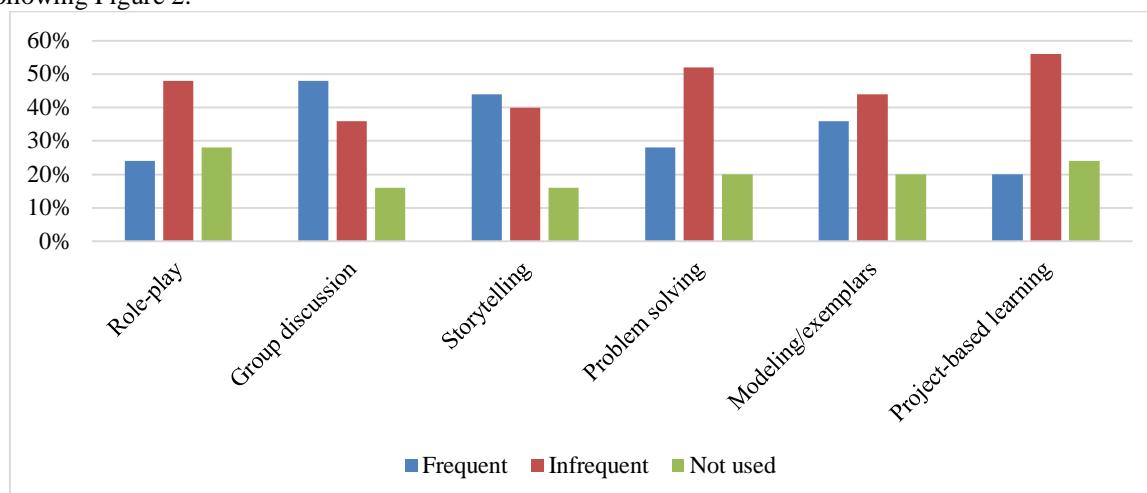


Figure 2. Current status of human-rights-integrated methods in Moral Education

Group-based learning is used most frequently (52%), reflecting an emphasis on cooperation and student participation. Experiential learning (40%) and out-of-class learning (32%) are moderately used but underleveraged for authentic human-rights practice. Individual learning is least frequent (28%), suggesting limited attention to personalization and learner differences. “Not used” remains 16–24% across formats, indicating constraints in time, facilities, or implementation capacity.

3.3.3. Facilitators and Barriers to Integrating Human Rights in Moral Education

A survey on facilitators and barriers to integrating human rights into Moral Education yielded the following results.

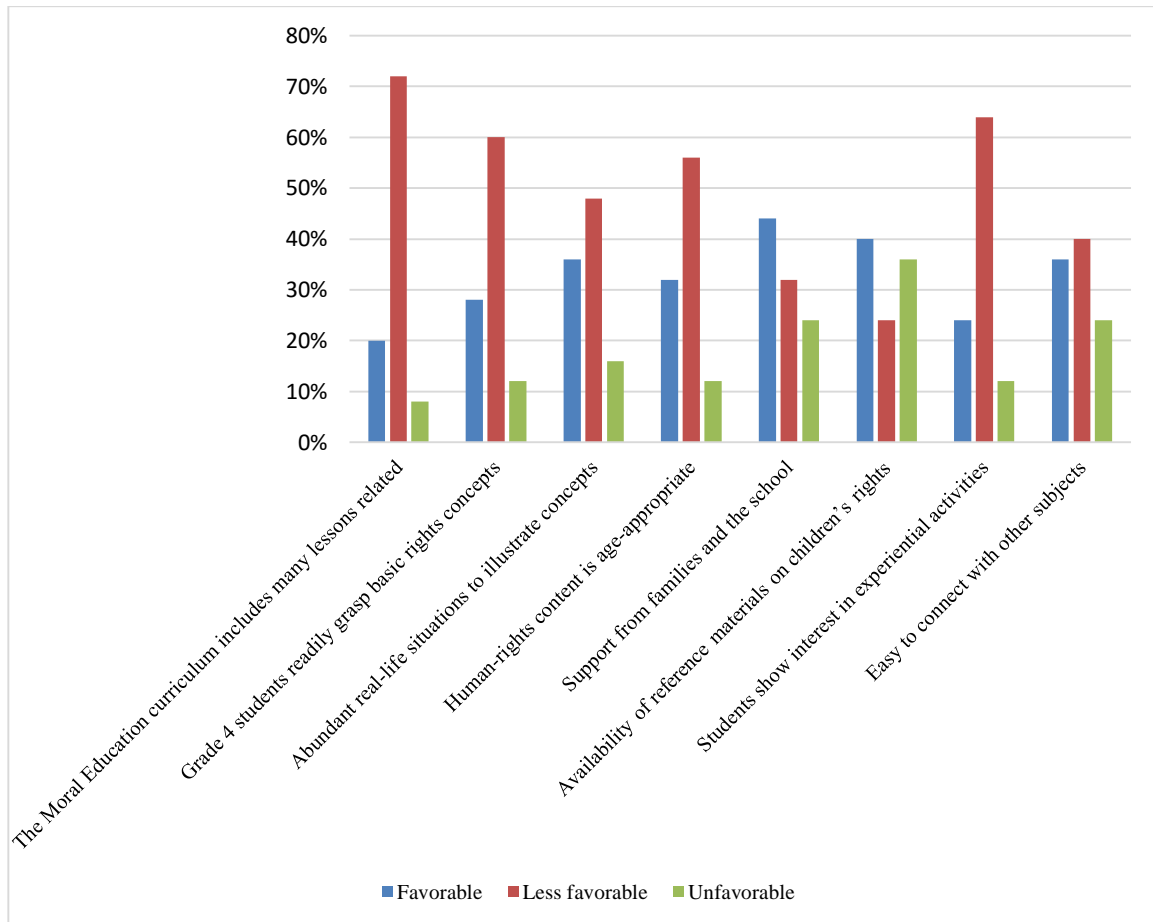


Figure 3. Degree of Facilitation for Human-Rights Integration

Most factors were rated “somewhat favorable” or “not favorable,” indicating nontrivial constraints on integration. Notably, only 20% of teachers considered the curriculum’s linkage to children’s rights clearly favorable (72% “somewhat favorable”), suggesting limited depth or insufficient design for effective exploitation. Although family/school support (44%) and availability of references (40%) are relative strengths, the shares reporting “not favorable” (24–36%) reflect uneven resources and coordination.

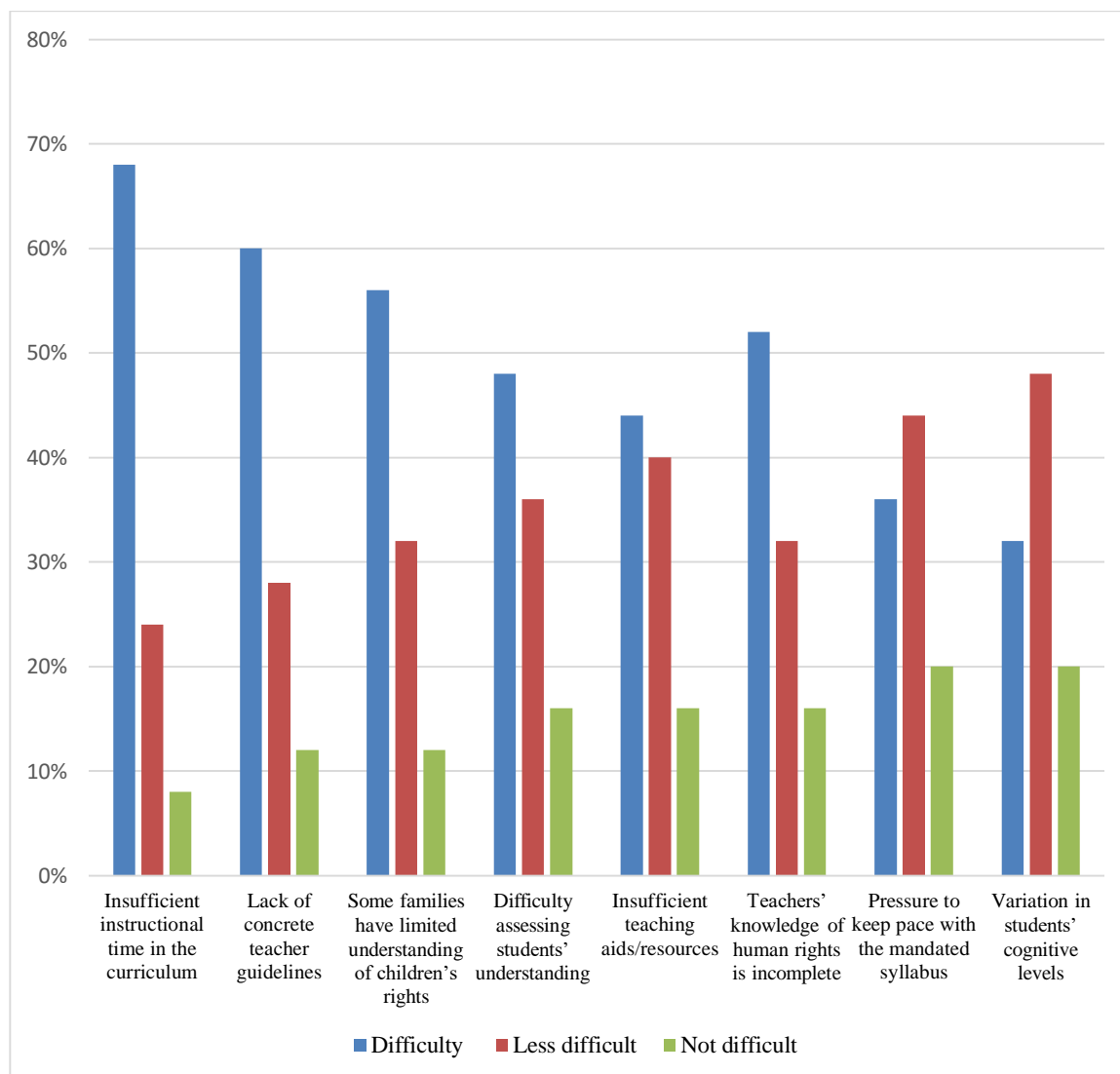


Figure 4. Degree of Difficulty for Human-Rights Integration

Teachers face significant barriers, led by limited time (68%), lack of practical guidance (60%), and insufficient teacher knowledge (52%). Family understanding (56%) also constrains consistent reinforcement at home. Challenges in assessment (48%) and resources (44%) further hinder a practice-oriented, rights-based approach, even as pacing pressures and learner diversity remain persistent, though relatively less acute.

3.4. The Design Process and Implementation Measures for Integrating HRE in Moral Education

3.4.1. The Process of Designing Lesson Plans for Integrating Human Rights Education

To ensure the effective integration of human rights education into Moral Education at the primary level, it is essential to design lesson plans following a scientific, systematic process that suits the psychological characteristics of primary school students. This process not only guarantees the fulfillment of the objectives and learning outcomes of the Moral Education curriculum, but also allows human rights content to be embedded naturally and effectively, in line with the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam. Accordingly, the lesson design process consists of the following steps: analyzing the curriculum, identifying integration content, defining lesson objectives, selecting appropriate teaching methods and formats, designing learning activities, and planning for assessment. The process is summarized in the diagram below:

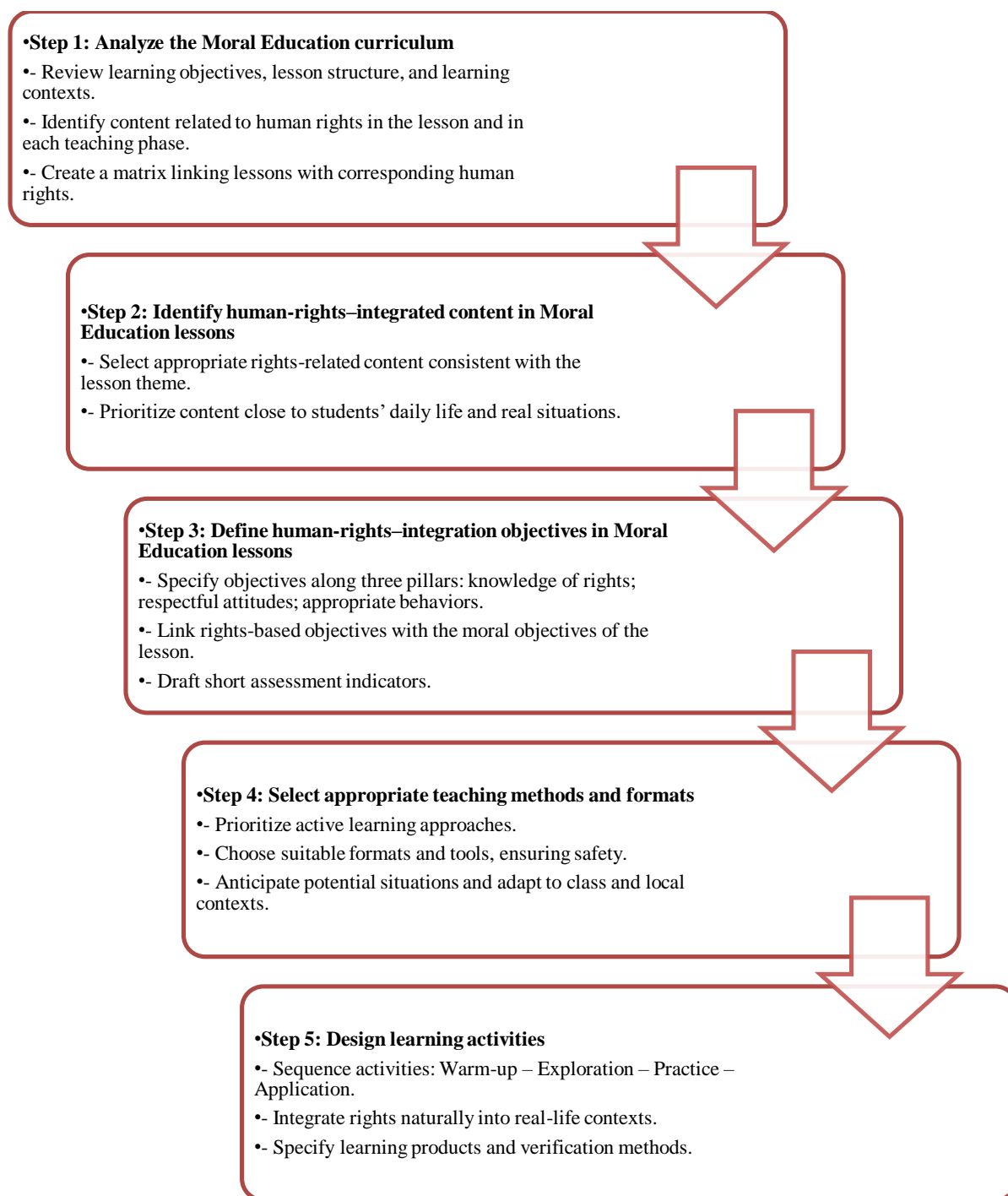


Diagram 1. Human Rights Lesson Plan Design Process

3.4.2. Measures for Organizing Integrated Human Rights Education in Moral Education

Below is a concise, publication-ready set of instructional measures for integrating Human Rights Education (HRE) into primary-level Moral Education in Vietnam—generalizable across grades. Each measure is grounded in (i) scientific bases (knowledge–attitude–action; social-emotional learning), (ii) legal bases (alignment with MoET Decision 4746 HRE Framework), and (iii) practical bases (feasibility in Vietnamese primary schools).

(1) Scenario-based case pedagogy

Design short, realistic cases (school–family–community) that surface a specific right/duty (e.g., participation, assistance, property, non-discrimination). Guide pupils to identify the right → weigh options → justify a respectful action. Map every case to a strand in Decision 4746 and to the lesson's moral objective.

(2) Role-play for rights practice.

Have pupils enact common dilemmas (exclusion, bullying, misuse of public assets) and rehearse speak-up, seek-help, and respectful negotiation. Keep scripts brief; debrief via feelings–rights–actions to convert abstract norms into socio-emotional and civic skills across grades.

(3) Experiential learning & mini-projects

Implement one-week, low-cost tasks (e.g., “Worker Appreciation Profile,” “Kindness/Inclusive Playground Audit”) that evidence real-life exercise of rights (labor respect, assistance to vulnerable peers, participation). Co-plan with families and local partners; ensure consent, safety, and inclusion.

(4) Structured rights-lens discussion

Use simple protocols (Think–Pair–Share; circle time) with fixed prompts: Who is affected? Which right? What alternatives? Why is this right-respecting? This builds democratic participation and respectful expression—core to children’s rights—while fitting tight timetables.

(5) Cross-curricular integration

Connect Moral Education with Vietnamese, Science, History–Geography, and Arts (e.g., reading narratives on dignity, investigating safe water, drawing “rights in our school”). This addresses Decision 4746’s breadth while reinforcing concepts through multiple modalities.

(6) Competency-based assessment of HRE

Assess what pupils can do: (a) identify the relevant right, (b) show a respectful attitude, (c) choose/perform an appropriate action. Use brief rubrics, observation checklists, exit tickets, and mini-portfolios (case responses, role-play reflections, project artifacts). Report against Decision-4746 strands and grade-level expectations.

(7) Teacher guidance, differentiation, and safeguards

Provide one-page lesson briefs (target right, age-fit examples, key questions, misconceptions, cautions). Differentiate with visuals and sentence starters; adopt safeguarding norms: consent for images, non-stigmatizing examples, referral pathways for risk. This ensures legal compliance, equity, and feasibility across diverse school contexts.

Together, these measures operationalize HRE’s knowledge–attitude–action triad within the primary Moral Education curriculum, legally aligned and practically workable nationwide—moving HRE from policy to routine classroom practice.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that integrating Human Rights Education (HRE) into primary Moral Education in Vietnam is both necessary and feasible when grounded in a coherent nexus of scientific, legal, and practical bases. Scientifically, HRE develops the mutually reinforcing triad of knowledge–attitude–action, aligning with competency-based education and socio-emotional learning. Legally, Vietnam’s MoET Decision 4746 provides an explicit framework that legitimizes and guides the selection of age-appropriate rights content. Practically, Vietnamese classrooms, families, and communities offer authentic contexts in which children can encounter and practice rights and duties in everyday life.

Building on these foundations, the paper proposed a set of classroom-ready measures—scenario-based cases, role-play, experiential mini-projects, structured rights-lens discussions, cross-curricular connections, competency-based assessment, and teacher guidance with safeguarding. Together, these measures translate HRE from policy statements into routine pedagogy. They enable teachers to make rights visible in common school dilemmas (participation, non-discrimination, respect for labor and property), to rehearse respectful responses, and to document growth through concise rubrics and learning artifacts.

Three implications follow. First, teacher development should prioritize short, practice-oriented guidance (one-page lesson briefs, sample cases, assessment rubrics) and coaching on safeguarding and differentiation. Second, school leadership should timetable periodic experiential or project activities, and establish simple consent and privacy protocols to strengthen school–family–community collaboration. Third, evaluation of HRE should move beyond recall of concepts to evidence of action—what pupils can identify, express, and do in real situations. The study is limited by the need for wider empirical validation across diverse regions and by resource variation among schools. Future work should include quasi-experimental trials of the proposed measures, development of open educational resources aligned with Decision 4746, and longitudinal tracking of pupils’ rights-respecting behaviors. With sustained support, integrating HRE into Moral Education can help cultivate Vietnamese primary pupils as respectful, empathetic, and responsible citizens.

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