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## **A LITERATURE REVIEW ON LOTUS CULTURE EDUCATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES**

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims to write a literature review on past research works to serve as the proper scientific background to implement lotus culture education for high school students. The research procedures were done by theoretically integrated methodologies. Our research findings show that many research projects on lotus culture have been conducted while those on lotus culture education for students remain limited, especially scientific research work on the model of lotus culture education for students. Thus, it is essential for scientific research to focus on lotus culture education for high school students through experiential activities.*

**Keywords:** *High school student, lotus culture education.*

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## **TỔNG QUAN NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ GIÁO DỤC VĂN HÓA SEN CHO HỌC SINH PHỔ THÔNG**

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### **Tóm tắt**

*Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là tổng quan được các nghiên cứu trong lịch sử để làm rõ cơ sở khoa học cho thực hiện giáo dục văn hóa sen cho học sinh phổ thông. Kết quả nghiên cứu được thực hiện theo định hướng của các phương pháp luận và sử dụng phối hợp các phương pháp nghiên cứu lý luận. Văn hóa sen có nhiều kết quả nghiên cứu nhưng giáo dục văn hóa sen cho học sinh ít được nghiên cứu. Đặc biệt là chưa có công trình khoa học nghiên cứu về mô hình giáo dục văn hóa sen cho học sinh. Đây là vấn đề có ý nghĩa cấp thiết cho khoa học và thực tiễn giáo dục trải nghiệm sáng tạo văn hóa sen cho học sinh.*

**Từ khóa:** *Giáo dục văn hóa sen, học sinh phổ thông.*

## 1. Introduction

Promoting indigenous cultural values is one of the key issues for any country and territory to develop and integrate themselves into a flat and globalized world. One of Vietnam's typical cultural values is the lotus plant, which is of great meaning in terms of economy, culture, science, art, and tourism development and the flower itself has been chosen as the national flower of Vietnam. Furthermore, some provinces in the Mekong Delta (Dong Thap for example) have chosen the Lotus as the symbol of the province. The wonderful values of lotus are only maximized when the young generation is exposed to experiential education creativity through a wide range of activity models. Experience is an effective method that promotes learning through doing; learning from creative experiential activities enables students to attain knowledge and experience with the highest educational significance. Via these organized activities, the image of the lotus would shed light on the minds, inspire intense love, and create a breakthrough for high-value products from the lotus plants. To successfully implement lotus culture education for students, researchers should make a detailed review to have an overall vision, inheriting outgoing scientific achievements of high values. This is an issue of urgent significance for the current jobs of scientific research and education for the young generation, who as active subjects play a key role in creating lotus culture and a unique indigenous culture.

## 2. Research methods

The research results are achieved by following theoretical research methods:

The approaches, principles, rules and categories belonging to dialectical materialism and historical materialism are applied. These help navigate the vision, deepen thinking, and determine methods to educate school students about the lotus culture.

Approaches orienting this research include (i) *Systematic and structural approach*: to put the research subject under a holistic and universal consideration, and at the same time to identify the key points, breakthrough factors for exploitation to maximize their advantages, roles, and functions in the implementation of lotus culture education for students. (ii) *Historical approach*: to conduct a meticulous study about outgoing scientific achievements for inheritance, and at the same time to pay attention to specific conditions and circumstances to feasibly and effectively implement lotus culture education for students. (iii) *Objective approach*: to implement the research, based on the system of scientific arguments, meeting the true nature and objective development of the research subject, taking advantage of objective laws to propose an appropriate model of lotus culture education for students. (iv) *Practical approach*: to see education as the source, the driving force, and the standard for conducting overall research, finding a solid scientific background for proposing a model of lotus culture education for students. In addition, the research is based on *the student-centered teaching approach*, *the integrated* and *experiential* approach, the theory of *multi-intelligences*, and students' talents in the exploration and creation of lotus culture.

The theoretical research method is used in their close coordination as follows: *Collecting information and documents* from many reliable sources published at home and abroad, especially books, scientific research projects, articles in prestigious scientific journals, guiding documents by the Party, the State, the cultural sector, etc. about education on lotus culture and lotus culture education for students; *Reading and analyzing* research results to deeply understand the strong points and scientific achievements to be inherited. Besides, reviewing these findings, we *make a synthesis* to have an overall vision of the lotus culture education model through experiential activities for students. From the outgoing scientific findings, we classify and collect them into scientific arguments in terms of the characteristics of the contents of the overall framework of lotus culture, the model of lotus culture education

through experiential activities for students. We also offer full arguments under the overall structure framework. Scientific achievements are *comprehensively evaluated* so that the research gaps are identified for continuous research and contributions. The methods should then be synchronously used to maximize their role in the overall research on lotus culture education through experiential activities for students.

### 3. Research results

#### 3.1. Research results on lotus culture

Lotus culture is perceived as the material and spiritual values that the lotus brings forth. The lotus as a perennial aquatic plant, is believed to be present on earth about one hundred million years ago. In ancient times, the lotus was once a popular plant growing along the banks of the Nile River in Egypt and called the “sacred blue lotus of the Nile” (*Nymphaea caerulea*). From Egypt, the lotus was brought to Assyria and then widely cultivated throughout Persia, India, China, Vietnam, Japan, and Thailand. The lotus has great values in terms of economy, art, architecture, spiritual culture, and religion.

**Economic aspect:** Pal and Dey (2015) said that lotus “is a plant of important aquatic economic values, not only a beautiful decorative flower, but also a valuable source of medicinal herbs and nutritious food,” and asserted that almost all parts of the lotus plant could be used. According to De (2020), in India the lotus used to be also a kind of popular vegetable and traditional medicinal plant with great economic values. In Vietnam, there have been many valuable scientific research results on lotus. Hoang (2016) has a research project on the lotus and proposed a variety of genetic resources of lotus plants (*Nelumbo nucifera* Gaertn) to be preserved and bred. Nguyen (2020) studied the botanical characteristics, physiology, and biochemistry of lotus and did an in-vitro propagation of some lotus grown in Thua Thien Hue. Hoang (2012) had a project to develop the extraction and purification of conessin, kaempferol, and nuciferin from medicinal herbs, serving as standardized criteria in drug testing. Some research papers on lotus have been published in scientific journals such as Nguyen et al. (2000) who studied the effects of nuciferine extracted from lotus leaves on rabbits’ electrocardiogram and electroencephalogram. Tran and Phan (2004) did some research on lotus plants in medicine; Nguyen and et al (2022) conducted an overview of lotus cultivation activities and the potential for diversification of lotus products of farming households. Nguyen and Pham (2022) analyzed the economic efficiency of lotus brought by households in Dong Thap province. Pham (2017) researched the potentialities and solutions for the development of Dong Thap lotus plants. Nguyen (2018) launched a project and exploited the culinary cultural value of the lotus in tourism activities in Dong Thap province.

**Cultural and social life:** The lotus flower is the national flower of India and Malawi. In Vietnam, Pham (2013) discussed the national flower, making the lotus flower in comparison with all 13 criteria for voting the plant for the national flower, including its long-standing origin in Vietnam, strong adaptation capacity, and its presence in most regions of the country; symbol of the national cultural identity and character of the Vietnamese people; being beautiful in form, color, fragrance, cultural, artistic, historical and life value. Additionally, the lotus is considered as an “ambassador” of tourism development. Shi (2015), a researcher at the Department of Tourism, Zhejiang University of Economics, learned about the necessity and significance of the lotus, lotus culture associated with the development of tourism in Hangzhou. He praised the lotus because the flower is “known as the queen of flowers” and because the lotus flower carries a kind of cultural and ideological progress as well as a long and solid cultural tradition in the hearts of the Chinese people”. Therefore, the development of tourism in Hangzhou is inseparable from the cultural significance of lotus flowers, focusing on the development of lotus cultural tourism resources in Hangzhou.

Phônpho (2014) has pointed out that the relationship of the lotus flower with the lifestyle showed by the Thai people from the time of the Sukhothai kingdom to the present period is all related to the lotus. He pointed out that in Thai culture, the lotus flower is always placed on the table and symbolizes for purity and sacredness. He said that the art related to the lotus flower in Thailand is a synthetic art and is imbued by Thai artists into their artwork. This makes Thai art one of the most interesting Buddhist arts of Southeast Asia or of Eastern art in general. Also, several dissertations and graduation theses touching upon this topic such as Nguyen (2000): Lotus in Vietnamese culture, and Le (2000) with “Lotus flowers in Vietnamese culture from tradition to modernity”. Dong Thap province uses the image of the lotus flower as key logos representing the province, tourism culture, investment cooperation. The province has already invested a project to develop lotus plants; organized festivals to honor, promote and build the image of Dong Thap via “Lotus Hometown”, “Lotus Capital”, “Pink Lotus Land”, “Lotus Baby Symbol”. In 2022 and 2024, Dong Thap organized a lotus festival with many activities to create a material and spiritual culture related to lotus, bringing about indigenous cultural achievements in Dong Thap, the land of pink lotus.

**Architecture and art:** Lotus flowers are bright and beautiful in colors, and the shape of the lotus flower also has a special meaning in terms of geometry. On studying the concepts of the lotus flowers in traditional and modern architecture, Maryan (2022) affirmed that the presence of the lotus flowers was very important in the art of gardening in Japan, while the lotus pillar played an important role in Egyptian architecture, and the lotus flowers were widely used in Indian temples and stone carvings. In modern architecture, the Singapore Museum of Arts and Sciences is unique in its architecture and form as its appearance is reminiscent of a lotus flower. In the work “Simulating the lotus in architecture: used in the wall and ceiling decoration of palaces, houses and tombs in ancient Egypt”, Ahmed (2022) demonstrated that the Egyptians loved the lotus very much and showed it clearly in photography, entertainment, for decorative items for houses, gardens, temples, and many other places. The lotus flowers also appeared in Egyptian art and architecture, as artists and architects used the flowers to create plant motifs that were of great importance in the art of ancient Egypt. Similarly, we also noticed the image of lotus and lotus flowers in ancient architecture, in a research paper entitled “The most common decorative motifs in Bagan temples”, Linn (2020) first affirmed that the lotus flowers were considered an important flower in the ancient East. In the 8th century BC, the custom of using lotus motifs was transferred from Egypt to Phoenicia and then to Mesopotamia and Iran. Explaining the appearance of the lotus in temple architecture, the author explained that “in Buddhism, the Buddha, who is free from afflictions, is compared to a lotus flower that escapes from “mud and water”. Therefore, the lotus flower shows a person who has no disturbing emotions and is pure.

In Vietnam, lotus has been introduced into *the Dictionary of World Cultural Symbols* by Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1997). Nguyen (2017) in the book *History of Vietnamese Thoughts* has a comment on the value of lotus flowers in the Buddhist architecture presented in the One Pillar Pagoda: “... a work that has decorated the Linga-Yoni relics of Chiem Thanh: the image of a lotus flower appearing in the middle of the lagoon, on a massive stone stalk wearing a small temple with a curved roof, reminding the people of the image of the modern stilt house of the Dong Son Civilization”. Fisher (2002) studied architecture related to Buddhism in which the lotus becomes a major theme in these works, typically the lotus symbol. The architecture of the 9-storey lotus building in tower architecture in some ancient pagodas of Vietnam. In the meaning of the lotus image and the 9-layer relics, the lotus flower is used quite commonly in Buddhism. In addition to the familiar symbolic images in Buddhist life, lotus architecture also has more special values: the image of the lotus flower expressing the “noble philosophy” of human vitality with the virtue of diligence and perseverance on the

road to liberation full of hardships. Regarding these contents, several authors for example Nguyen and Du (2011) with “Understanding the image of the lotus in ancient Vietnamese architecture”, Nguyen (2000) with “Lotus Symbols in Vietnamese Culture” while Le (2011) writing “Flower symbols in folklore”, Pham et al. (2022) researching the lotus pattern applied on Buddhist costumes for Buddhist females aged 30 to 55 years old in Hanoi. Finally, Trieu (2007) contributed the article “Lotus in Vietnamese traditional art”. The lotus is an inspiration for artists to create hundreds of poems, songs, verses, proverbs, and chants rich in contents, arts, philosophy of life, with profound educational significance.

### **3.2. Research results on lotus culture education for high school students**

Lotus culture education is the process of organizing education activities to promote the active role of students as the main subjects to discover and create material and spiritual values relating to lotus. Discussing culture education for students, the Party Central Committee (2013) affirms the following guiding views “attaching great importance to education of personality, ethics, and lifestyle with strong focus on the basic values of culture, traditions, and national ethics, the quintessence of human culture”. In his research project entitled “Education of traditional cultural values in Vietnamese high schools”, Nguyen (2012) has proposed the objectives, contents and methods of educating traditional cultural values for students through the general education program in order to maintain, consolidate, and develop Vietnamese traditional cultural values. In the ministerial research project, Nguyen (2006) focused his research on the orientation, objectives, contents, and solutions to educate Vietnamese high school students about traditional cultural values. Nguyen (2001) has deeply analyzed the current situation of proposing a number of forms and measures of traditional culture, and art education for the younger generation. Banks (1971) recommended that teachers should have a comprehensive understanding and respects for other cultures. Teachers play an important role in national culture education. Their attitudes and expectations have profound impacts on students' attitudes, perspectives, behaviors, and perceptions. Kana et al. (2010) studied the relationship between “Culture-based education and its association with learners' learning outcomes”. Research work by Singh and Herold (2014) from Northern Arizona University showed the benefits of culture-based education for indigenous peoples in the U.S. and communities in Southeast Asia. Gay (2013) from Washington Seattle University conducted research on “Teaching and learning through cultural diversity.” He pointed that education toward meeting culture studies as a technique to improve the learning outcomes of multi-ethnic students. In addition, there are a number of research papers on the development of reading culture for students, for example, Nguyen (2016) developing reading culture for primary school students. Nguyen Giang (2015) had the project “*Local culture of Kien Giang province*”. Phan (2011) published “Education of cultured communication behavior for students and students”. Bartell (2003) researched the construction and development of university culture. Hoang and Le (2022) aimed his project on “Measures to manage the behavior culture of students against the impact of social networks”. Cultural education for students has generated many research results, especially scientists in the field. However, lotus culture education for students currently receives little attention.

### **3.3. Research on lotus culture education through experiential activities for high school students**

Experiential education activities have attracted many researchers from around the world and Vietnam. Confucius (551-479 BC) discussed the issue with the view of “practice and use”. Comenius (1592-1670) attached great importance to the principle of visual education, associated with practice, with the natural environment. Rousseau (1712-1778) had an experiential education perspective across the ages. In their scientific research topic, Huynh et

al. (2018) systematized research projects on experiential education. Dewey attached great importance to experimental intelligence for students. Kolb has studied the theory and process of effective experiential learning. Conrad and Hedin, Druism, Owens and Owens have studied the development of experiential learning programs, transforming experiences into educational experiences. UNESCO (2002) identified 4 pillars of education, including “Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be human”. In Vietnam, many authors are interested in similar research projects. Ha et al. (2014) has implemented a key State-level project “Research and development of capacity to design creative experiential activities for high school teachers”. Nguyen et al. (2016) published the document entitled “Organizing creative experiential activities in high schools”. In 2018, the program of experiential activities, career experience activities were promulgated and organized for high school students. Dinh (2020) conducted a project “Methods of organizing experiential activities in primary schools” to help teachers know how to organize experiential activities effectively.

Currently, there are a number of authors researching educational models such as Nguyen and Le (2017) who studied “School counseling model in high schools”. Nguyen et al. (2019) did the project “Researching and proposing a model of cultural value education for Vietnamese high school students in the new period”. Huynh (2020) studied “Model of organizing local history education activities for students in primary schools”. However, no research results regarding the model of lotus culture education for students through experiential activities has been found, thus there is still a gap in both theory and practice.

Reviewing the relevant literature, the authors commented, evaluated, and identified the new research of the topic:

Lotus culture has received many local and foreign authors interested in finding its rich and unique values in terms of the economy, life culture, spiritual culture, and fine arts. However, these studies are single and isolated. Little information has been gathered into an elite system of what and how culture values of lotus would be used for student education.

Education about traditional culture, school culture, behavior culture, local culture, and reading culture have been the familiar themes for researchers. However, for lotus culture education for students alone, no scientific work has been implemented. Identifying the elements for the implementation of the lotus culture education for students is a new contribution to the science and practice of education.

There are studies on models of traditional cultural value education, of school counseling, of local history education; however, the model of lotus culture education through experiential activities for high school students has not been studied.

As a result, lotus culture has been found in many research results. Lotus culture education for students is at the second rank of being studied respectively while the model of lotus culture education through experiential activities for high school students has not been conducted at home and abroad. This issue is of urgent scientific and practical significance.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Lotus culture has been studied in the fields of economy, social life, spiritual culture, fine arts, and arts of different aspects. In addition, several studies on traditional culture education, school culture, local culture, reading culture, etc. are found. However, few scientific works on lotus culture education for students has been done. On the other hand, several models of traditional cultural and local history education have already been studied while the model of lotus culture education through experiential activities for students alone has not been mentioned in Vietnam and worldwide. This research theme, therefore, has significant

contributions to new theoretical and practical contributions to educational science in general, to lotus culture education, to indigenous cultural education for the young generation, thus having a breakthrough significance for human and social development in the new era.

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