



## PHAN CHAU TRINH'S IDEOLOGY OF EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

Vo Van Dung<sup>1i</sup>,  
Tran Mai Uoc<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD, University of Khanh Hoa, Viet Nam

<sup>2</sup>Assoc. Prof., Banking University,  
Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

### Abstract:

According to educational thoughts, Duy Tan movement was an educational revolution in Vietnam in the beginning of the 20th century which was a modern and scientific trend. Phan Chau Trinh (1872-1926), the leader of Duy Tan movement suggested three main points of the movement: "People's knowledge development" ("Khai dân trí"), "People's spirit adjustment" ("chấn dân khí"), "People's welfare caring" ("hộ dân sinh"). The ideology of educational development, "people's knowledge development" by real teaching, real practising still has its greatest value to people's knowledge, and his ideology in education renovation is still pertinent to people's knowledge, human resources and also the role of education in our country today.

**Keywords:** people's knowledge development (khai dân trí), people's spirit adjustment (chấn dân khí), people's welfare caring (hộ dân sinh), Duy Tân, movement

### 1. Introduction

At the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century, Vietnam history was turned into a new stage. To adapt with the new circumstances, the patriotic activities of national salvation were different far from the ones in the past. In fact, Phan Chau Trinh and his comrades, Confucian scholars, who had "enlightened" ways in the nation salvation by the different trends. One of the outstanding trends in this stage was Duy Tan movement. It was considered a revolution of cultural renovation. This cultural renovation had affected the economy, culture and society of our country at that time. And the most noticeable thing in this revolution was its contributions to education. Being the leader of Duy Tan movement, Phan Chau Trinh suggested three main points of the Duy Tan movement: people's knowledge development (khai dân trí), people's spirit adjustment (chấn dân khí), and people's welfare caring (hộ dân sinh). When

---

<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [vovandungcdk@gmail.com](mailto:vovandungcdk@gmail.com)

talking about the Duy Tan movement, we must notice "people's knowledge", referring to the development of education of the patriot Phan Chau Trinh. The idea of educational development "educating the people" through the real, practical and experimental way of the Duy Tan movement, which Phan was the initiator to date, remains valuable.

## 2. Content

### 2.1. Phan Chau Trinh's ideology of people's knowledge development

In 1958, French colonialists invaded Viet Nam. They established a colonial government to exploit natural resources and cheap labour, they also expanded consuming market. However, patriotic scholars have realized that the method of protecting the national independence of the Vietnamese people in the feudal period is no longer appropriate. But due to the extremism of thought, the king of the Nguyen Dynasty was not sensitive to the rapid change of the world, leading to the Nguyen successively failed in the struggle to defend national independence. Typically, the French totally pacified Viet Nam and controlled most of the patriotic movements (except Yen The Movement of De tham still remained and was cleared in 1913). The French tried to improve their colonial government and the army. On the other hand, they rushed to exploit Viet Nam resources rapidly. So at the end of the 19th century and in the early of 20th century Viet Nam had changed clearly both in economic and society. In economic, capitalism mode of production was imported so feudal monarchy mode of production which meant self-produced and self-supplied was not exclusively dominated any more.

Phan Chau Trinh (1872-1926) was a famous early 20th century Vietnamese nationalist. He also used the alias Tay Ho. Phan Chau Trinh appreciated the role that education played in the nation renovation. Being the leader of the Duy Tan (national reform) movement, Phan Chau Trinh believed in attaining Vietnamese liberation by educating the population and by appealing to French democratic principles by sending students abroad to study and opening schools for the Vietnamese people. With those activities, he hoped they could contribute to achieving social progress and national sovereignty and independence through economic, political, cultural and social reform in colonial Vietnam. At this time Phan Chau Trinh and his commands jumped to a conclusion that Viet Nam was in a dark and shameful situation just because of the feudal monarchy and its outdated ideas were in Vietnamese people's mind for thousands years. Meanwhile in European countries and American Countries and also Japan were wealthy and modern, so Vietnam had to reform to catch up those countries. So replacing the feudal education with a modern and healthy education in both content and form was an urgent mission of education. From that idea, Phan Chau Trinh started to carry out a revolution in education for Vietnamese learners and also for Vietnamese people. People's knowledge development: which means giving up the old ways of passive learning, opening schools for romanized Vietnamese language and practical scientific knowledge, and doing away with outdated customs and practices. With the purpose to improve Vietnamese people's knowledge and get independence for his

country, Viet Nam. He also tried to popularize this ideal by press, poems to Vietnamese people.

From the human perspective, Phan Chau Trinh believed that the people's happiness came from the idea that they had to have a better life than the others; the misery came from having a worse life than others, so the people needed to compete with others. As leaders of the country, they believed they needed to suffer a difficult life and so they needed to take risks in their life to compete. He blamed the people who were monarchists and were not patriots. From society's perspective, he strongly criticized the nepotism and outdated customs. He believed the nepotism had blocked the progress of the society. There were a lot of bad habits associated with the nepotism. So if people wanted to reorganize the society, first of all they needed to break down the patriarchal behaviour which began from the Confucianism.

To the outdated Confucianism, Phan Chau Trinh strongly accused and considered it as a bad education which only taught people the idea of studying only for themselves to get high position in the society not studying to build the country. Those people forgot the shame of losing the country into the French Government's hand. Different far from the other revolutionaries, Phan Chau Trinh was aware of the basic reason why Viet Nam was invaded. That was because we lagged behind many centuries in knowledge compared to the other countries. On the other hand, Viet Nam was behind the times compared to the western countries. We were still an outdated agricultural economy when the others were in an industrial economy and they were on the way to an economy of knowledge.

Phan Chau Trinh realized that the world had been changed strongly in globalization but in Viet Nam; people were still blinded from the information about the world around us. And we were absolutely lost. If Vietnamese people wanted to save the country, there was only one way to study to get the knowledge and bring our country to the same level as the other countries. Only in that way, we could survive and compete with them. Phan Chau Trinh could see clearly that the development of the country was as important as independence for the country. If the country had the independence but if the people were uneducated about the information compared to the other countries then sooner or later they would depend completely on the foreign country. So Phan Chau Trinh with his two friends, Tran Quy Cap and Huynh Thuc Khang, (Three of them were named "Quang Nam trio") mobilized the Duy Tan in 1906. The trio went everywhere all over Viet Nam to open schools to teach new science subjects of the Western countries. They invited people in villages to come to hear them talked about new western ideas and values. The movement quickly spread out from the central Viet Nam to the whole country. And only two years later, "Central rebellion" produced a stir in the country's opinion and also in France. Looking back Duy Tan movement, we could understand that this is just an ideal civilization not an armed rise. The purpose of this movement was only to propagate the new knowledge and ideas to Vietnamese people to help them recognize that globalization was happening out there so they could help themselves and also the country to integrate into that world.

The Duy Tan movement aimed to make archaeology prosper strengthened the people's study through practiced and dignified Vietnamese script. All the people from the poor to the rich must learn all the civilizations from the other countries. If so the society could get progress and people would have the right to live equally. That's why Phan Chau Trinh's ideology still remains of value today.

To broaden people's knowledge, Phan Chau Trinh believed that the study should be practical to people's lives not only studying the superficial poems and literature of the ancients. Phan Chau Trinh, himself was a very eager to study new things, he could do a lot of different jobs. He appealed to people to develop vocational education, develop jobs to develop the economy. In the domain of learning, he thought education needed to reform both content and methodology, and especially education needed to focus on developing science and techniques.

## **2.2. Phan Chau Trinh ideas of study, practice and working**

With the aim of practical education, teaching Vietnamese script, country history, new science subjects from western also were brought into teaching programme. Phan Chau Trinh's motto was study to get knowledge not to examine. Different far from the past, the teachers taught to make money, the learners studied for examining to get high position in society, this learning programme only taught people to get knowledge to improve themselves and apply the knowledge they have learnt into their lives, the learners didn't know what kind of qualifications they would get after they learnt. So mathematics, geography, practical science subjects were taught in this programme. Physical exercises and hygiene were also taught to help people know how to take care their health. Phan Chau Trinh also explained clearly: Agriculture and Industry produced as many products as goods. Trading helped people to sell products. Commerce and industry helped people to enrich the country. According to Phan Chau Trinh, schools should combine teaching the theory with business activities, agricultural activities, handicraft, and mining also. On the other hand, schools should teach the theory and also the vocational knowledge.

In the situation of impasse of Viet Nam at that time, unlike many poor Confucian scholars went back their villages to live a quiet life, Phan Chau Trinh was always thinking to find out a revolutionary way for the country. *"The ideology of improving people's knowledge was really made Viet Nam had changed the old ideology to get a higher awareness to suitable with the development of the era"* (Tran Mai Uoc, 2011). Those changes had given Viet Nam society a new face, a new thought, people talked about new poetry, new study, agricultural organization, trading organization, fashion and also new haircuts... Especially in education, there were clear, positive changes with a very fresh atmosphere. We could say that the issues mentioned and basically solved by "Khai Dan tri" are still of good value. First of all, the purpose of education was to educate strong, independent and self-controlled people. Second, in education methods, the purpose was to elicit critical thinking of the learners to make a positive learning style which are different from the old traditions of our learning. Today we not only evaluate the people's knowledge through universalizing education and quantity of the people who

have high qualifications but also the education's quality. The globalizing trend not only pauses at the national level like in the 20th century but also affect each individual. So the purpose of the modern education is educate people with total harmonious dignity to be able to work and study independently and also they must know how to co-operate with others in a new environment to meet the needs of globalization and integration.

The whole life of Phan Chau Trinh was dedicated to reforming the country. He had a deep belief in people's knowledge. He considered a wide education for Viet Nam people to create a society of learning with practice and practical results to develop our country.

### **2.3. Discussion**

To make Viet Nam get out the French domination at the end of the 19th century and early in the 20th century, Phan Chau Trinh believed that there were three things needed to do first; people's knowledge development, people's spirit adjustment, people's welfare caring. And Phan Chau Trinh put the "people's knowledge development" in the first place of the list because based on the historical background at that time, our country had a very outdated education as we mentioned before. That education based on Confucius (551-479 BC) from China. The purpose of this education was educate people in high position becoming gentleman, People were not educated because they were considered as "mean persons". That was the reason why Phan Chau Trinh believed that if people's knowledge was not improved, the other two things could not be carry out. Phan Chau Trinh emphasized that if we wanted to liberate the country, we had to improve people's knowledge and unite Viet Nam becoming a strong nation. So the choice of Phan Chau Trinh at that time was based on the education background and was an objective choice

In the new stage of educational development, faced with international background with a lot of challenges and also opportunities, the needs of economic and social development and integration trend, educational renovation is a real revolution. It combines with modernization and industrialization to make our country's development stronger, enduring to compete with other countries. In that situation, education has to meet the standards of the society.

Global integration would bring developing countries a lot of opportunities and also the challenges. To bring the country out of the outdated background, under developed, man is the key to success, and the education played an important role. That is why we needed to build an honest, modern, strong education to educate a high quality human resource.

However, today there are some developing countries that still have a weak educational system and cannot educate people to meet the needs of society. There is still commercialization in education. In these countries, students cannot get jobs after they graduate. The renovation in teaching methods and learning methods has not been effective. Students don't have a lot of chances to practice what they have learnt. The teaching methods and teaching material are not accorded.

Phan Chau Trinh's educational ideology stated that the quality of managers plays a decisive role in educational renovation and its effects on the public development. We need to develop a legal environment in education to build a developed and modern education which is suitable with the other countries in the area and the world. Having a flexible strategy, changing the point of view of education procedure is very important for us to catch up with an economy of a developing country. Besides that, we need to use human resource effectively in international co-operation in education to develop our education and then change to opened education step by step. We should consider training human resource, fostering talents, improving the educational quality into the priority tasks to build a progressive, modern education to update with the other educations around the world.

Phan Chau Trinh's motto was combining training with the needs of using human resource of the society is always right. On the other hand, changing from "training what we are having" to "what the society needs" is a very necessary job. Ho Chi Minh believed: in 1926 there was a wake up mind in Vietnamese people, then after that there was a death of Phan Boi Chau, an old and famous nationalist, the commemorations of his death were held in every region in Viet Nam at that time. The word "nationalism" was spoken and written in public. French teachers tried to stop their students from coming to the meetings and the commemorations. Students from different schools, especially in Sai Gon had students' strike. Around 20,000 students came to his funeral with banner with the word "nationalism" written on them. Vietnamese people had never seen any big event like that in their history. (Ho Chi Minh, 1995, p35)

### 3. Conclusion

At that time, Phan Chau Trinh was the one who could see clearly the weaknesses of Vietnamese people and also Viet Nam society. That was the reason why he focused on changing Viet Nam from its roots by improving Vietnamese people's knowledge through studying the education and science achievements of the world and giving up the outdated customs. He considered that Viet Nam had to develop the economy and education to be independent, integrated into the civilized world, liberate the country not asking for help from the foreign country, to use violence to get the freedom. Phan Chau Trinh believed that when Vietnamese people's knowledge improved, Viet Nam would have a long, true independence and freedom. Nowadays, Phan Chau Trinh's educational development ideology still remains valid and still plays an important role in Viet Nam education

### References

1. Ho Chi Minh, (1995), *Complete Works*, Volume 3, National Politics Publishing House, Hà Nội.

2. Phan Chau Trinh, (2005), *Complete Works*, Youth Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh city
3. Tran Mai Uoc, (2011), "The Influence of Chinese New Book on Phan Boi Chau's), *Theory and Education*, Issue 10.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).