

CONTRIBUTION OF “ENLIGHTENMENT” IN THE DUY TAN RENOVATION IN QUANG NAM TO THE NATIONAL EDUCATION UP TO NOW

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Nguyen Duy Phuong^{a*}, Nguyen Thi Hong Yen^b

Abstract: “Enlightenment” is one of the three main areas of the Duy Tan Renovation launched in the early 20th century in Quang Nam province to struggle against Confucianism, to abolish unsound customs, to disseminate the national language and practical scientific knowledge as well as to propagate bourgeois democracy. The Renovation brought valuable lessons to the Vietnamese education reform.

Key words: Enlightenment; Duy Tan; renovation.

1. Introduction

“Enlightenment” is one of the three main areas of the Duy Tan Renovation launched by Phan Chau Trinh, Huynh Thuc Khang and Tran Quy Cap in the early 20th century in Quang Nam province to struggle against Confucianism, to abolish unsound customs, to disseminate the national language and practical scientific knowledge, to propagate bourgeois democracy. In terms of education, it can be said that the Duy Tan Renovation with the idea of “Enlightenment” through the practical teaching, practical learning and application was a educational revolution in Vietnam in the early twentieth century towards science and modernization. The renovation brought valuable lessons to the Vietnamese education reform.

2. “Enlightenment” activities of patriotic patrons of Quang Nam in the Duy Tan Renovation and its impacts on the Vietnamese education in the early twentieth century

At the beginning of the twentieth century, from

^{a,b} The University of Danang - University of Science and Education

* Corresponding author

Nguyen Duy Phuong

Email: phuongduyls@gmail.com

Quang Nam land, the trio Phan Chau Trinh, Tran Quy Cap, Huynh Thuc Khang initiated a new theory about how to save the country based on three pillars:

“broadening the people’s knowledge, improving the people’s spirit, and strengthening talents”, in which “Enlightenment” was identified as a prerequisite to help citizens to become aware of their mission in the cause of saving the country and to have enough ability to participate in that cause. In order to “Enlighten” the people, the Confucian scholars launched a learning movement according to the new way with the content of renouncing the way of learning from the old education system to learn new knowledge in the Western education model.

The strong - willed patriotic scholars were all Confucians who had been trained in Confucian studies, but due to the conditions of contact with the trend of progressive ideas from the outside, they soon realized the old things, the backwardness and the harmfulness of the old education, from which they boldly protested the way of learning from chapters, the system of former competition-examinations, learning for fame, fortune and the benefit of the contemporary Confucian class. In 1905, the three men (Phan Chau Trinh, Tran Quy Cap, Huynh Thuc Khang) conducted a Duy Tan campaign. When they arrived in Binh Dinh, on the opening day of the exam, the contestants were very many and they tried to borrow names to participate in the exam. Phan Chau Trinh composed the poems *Chi Thanh Thong Thanh*, Huynh Thuc Khang and Tran Quy Cap composed the poems *Luang Son Luong Ngoc* in order to express the spirit of anti-attitude toward the

“cowardness” of government officers, the indifference of the Confucian class in the face of the current social status, to show criticism to the study of the chapters and the picky talent of the feudal regime. They agreed that *“the Confucian court examination has harmed our country for a long time but many feudal intellectuals still go back into the head like ants; these folks with this dream of passion wouldn’t wake up if they were not given a stick.”* [7; p.1419].

Not only criticizing and mercilessly renouncing the old education, the renovationists took steps on designing, organizing and building a new educational system with practical study and practical application in the Duy Tan Renovation. For the renovationists, learning was to have a career, to develop wisdom, to have knowledge, to have talent, not to learn to sit for examinations and gaining authority. Education must meet the requirements of society. Huynh Thuc Khang, one of the three leaders of the Duy Tan Renovation, asserted that “education must be exploitative (we understand that it was practical). *In the country, everyone must know a profession; industry is a profession; researching is a profession; technology is also a profession. For technology to flourish, teachers must know the students’ own talents.*” [7; p.286-269] Phan Chau also affirmed that he had to “*learn a profession*” in society, “*People highly respect those who have skill and profession - those who have no profession will always live in poverty.*” According to him, it doesn’t matter whether one is a “*carpenter or a blacksmith*” but “*talent or knowledge will be praised.*”

Talking about the content of education, Huynh Thuc Khang pointed out the content of pedagogy education by three things that could be summed up as: “*intellectuals, skills and personality and these three must be balanced.*” [7; p.286-269]. Particularly, the content of primary education should be considered seriously. They said, “*For such a long time elementary education just gave the people intellectual foundation. The purpose is create people a subtle and easy personality. Nowadays, primary education has a much more important function of fostering physical health, intellectual and moral formation.*” [7; p.581-586] Phan Chau Trinh also emphasized the importance of the transmission of scientific and technical knowledge in

the school, he wrote:

*“It is worth learning,
Do not just draw pictures for jokes;
Industry, technology,
Wisdom, the way to follow...”* [1; p.297].

In terms of educational methods, both Huynh Thuc Khang and Phan Chau Trinh advocated that “*Study goes hand in hand with practice*”. Because in society there is a very common fact that “*in real life, many things had been learned that proved useless, for many things the society needs then there isn’t enough knowledge. This is because the school environment just teaches theory without practice, so we must first teach practice and then teach theory. Use experience to teach rather than use books.*”

These educational ideas of the Confucian scholars contributed significantly to the birth of the new school system. The first area for propagating and opening Duy Tân Renovational school was in Quang Nam - the homeland of Phan Chau Trinh and his fellowmen. In there, from the start (1903) to 1908, they opened 40 schools with the purpose of learning to expand knowledge and acquire new knowledge. And it was from Quang Nam that the school movement spreading all over the country created an impressive touchstone for the Duy Tan Renovation. It is in these new schools that practical education, learning to apply, learning to serve the society proved to be completely different from traditional methods.

The educational content of Renovational school is fact-oriented, which offers the teaching of a full range of vocations from industry to commerce, not just based on saintly books, literary letters, political doctrines... The subjects taught in many schools are national language, mathematics, psychology, history, geography, physical education, art, Chinese and martial arts. New educational methods were also applied. Speech was one of the most innovative and progressive new ways whereby teachers and students were free to discuss. Preschools regularly organized lectures and group activities for students to hear and discuss political, social and progressive issues in countries around the world to apply to their country.

What is more, the Renovational school also demonstrated innovation and creativity in the management of a new type of school when students were exchanged among schools according to a given calendar. *“Each time the survey was held, on the full moon day, the first time the students gathered, this school led to another school on a rotation schedule for students to take the tests together”* [8; p.179]. Thereby, students among schools had conditions to exchange experiences, to emulate learning from each other, to create the spirit of solidarity among schools together. In addition, the school was also a place for public propaganda, business, production promotion, criticism for mandarins to drive away backward customs and stimulate a new lifestyle.

In order to develop education, improve people's intellectual level, the renovationists recognized that Vietnam needed to have their own scripts. The truth was that not until the early twentieth century had Vietnam had a separate language script to use but it still had to borrow Chinese characters. Overcoming the complexity, the Confucian scholars themselves stood up to remove the Confucian language system, urging the study of the national language - a type of recorded Vietnamese words created by the Christian missionaries for the Vietnamese people to easily remember and master, but since its acceptance was rejected by many former Confucian scholars because this was derived from the words of the West, the words of the diocese. The early twentieth century then witnessed the movement to learn the language script widely by the Confucian scholars to serve as a means of opening knowledge to people:

“First of all, you have to learn the national language,

Two different lines, different words, we have the word,

Say it out, write the sentence.” [5; p.398]

The innovations in education in Renovational schools in Quang Nam rapidly spread throughout North-Middle-South, such as Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc in Ha Noi, Nghia Thuc schools in Thanh Hoa Phan Thiet (Duc Thanh), Binh Thuan (in Phan Chu Trinh and Huynh Thuc Khang's book), contributed to the fundamental change in the Vietnamese modern

education. These schools produced generations of students who did not commit themselves to slavery, did not accept poverty and backwardness that they had embarked on to save the country, civilization of mankind.

3. Lessons for the current educational profession

Duy Tan Renovation in education exerted a deep impact not only on the education in the early twentieth century but also on the Renovation in education in the country at present with precious lessons. Nowadays, although education has been identified as a *“national policy”* and has received great attention from the whole society, there are still many limitations.

One hundred years ago, renovationalists focused on comprehensive education for students, which was not only vocational training but also more importantly, teaching students *“how to be a human”* and to cope with many difficulties and obstacles; our forefathers firmly performed this educational goal. Today, although there are better conditions for education, we have not done it yet. Contemporary education mainly focuses on teaching knowledge without paying sufficient attention to the teaching of skills and ethics for students. The content of education also lacks comprehensiveness. We spend a lot of time on natural sciences but pay little attention to social sciences. As a result, we have produced people with emotionless souls, lame morals and poor skills, who fail to meet the demands of the society. These constraints can be overcome if the *“comprehensive education”* lesson of the renovationalists from Quang Nam land is thoroughly researched and resolved to be executed in reality.

Nowadays, despite many big changes in teaching methods of teachers, there are still teachers who copy textbooks and stick severely to textbook content; there are students forced to say the right words. Teachers' method of testing is mainly based on learning by heart rather than stimulating creativity and thinking of students. Such ways of teaching and learning make lessons become very boring, monotonous, restraining the development of thinking, the ability to criticize and students' autonomy. This fact makes the advice of Huynh Thuc Khang that learners *“must have independent thoughts, free brains to judge, to develop*

their capacited” become more precious than ever.

Author Tran Thi Thu Luong in an article has argued that the most successful “enlightment” activity of the renovationalists was rightly choosing this new model and thoroughly implementing this innovation with strong determination. This is a very valid statement and it also makes us raise the question “Has Vietnamese education chosen a model and had it performed thoroughly yet?” Although we have experience many years of education reform, until now, it is clear that we have not developed an advanced education model that meets practical requirements of the society yet. Each era has different requirements and challenges, so there are no similar models but the philosophy of innovation is still unchanged. Studying educational reformers in the early 20th century, we must start the fundamental and comprehensive reform of Vietnamese education today by choosing / building a new model which is appropriately typical of our age and we must be determined to implement that model as our predecessors did.

Although the Duy Tan renovation in Vietnam in the early twentieth century did not go beyond motives for the saving the country and liberation, it was the first integration of “enlightment” the Confucian

scholars promoted and fostered “*real learning, real practice and real application*”, which made a positive change for education in Vietnam in early twentieth century. In the renewal of the country today, the development of Duy Tan renovationalists of the Quang land still remains valid with great significance.

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ĐÓNG GÓP CỦA HOẠT ĐỘNG “KHAI DÂN TRÍ” TRONG PHONG TRÀO DUY TÂN Ở QUẢNG NAM ĐỐI VỚI NỀN GIÁO DỤC NƯỚC NHÀ XƯA VÀ NAY

Tóm tắt: “Khai dân trí” là một trong ba nội dung chính của phong trào Duy Tân vào đầu thế kỉ XX ở Quảng Nam nhằm chống lối học tầm chương trích cú, khoa cử Nho giáo, bài trừ hủ tục; truyền bá quốc ngữ và những kiến thức khoa học thực dụng; tuyên truyền tư tưởng dân chủ tư sản. Dưới góc độ giáo dục, có thể nói rằng phong trào Duy Tân là một cuộc cách mạng giáo dục ở Việt Nam đầu thế kỉ XX theo hướng khoa học và hiện đại. Cuộc cách mạng ấy cũng đã để lại cho công cuộc đổi mới giáo dục Việt Nam hôm nay những bài học vô giá.

Từ khóa: Khai dân trí; Duy Tân; cách mạng.