

Vietnamese Education Reform in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries – Some Lessons Learned (From Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc Practice)

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Abstract: Although it only existed for a short time (from March to November 1907), Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc has left a valuable legacy of the spirit and content of educational reform. Through educational renovation activities of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc, the article analyzes valuable historical experiences in educational reform such as: improving people's knowledge; overcoming conservative and backward obstacles; implement universal education; innovating educational thinking and methods in Vietnam in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The lessons learned from Dong Kinh's educational innovation have longstanding historical value for the reform of education in Vietnam in the current period.

Keywords: Educational reform, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc, Duy Tan

I. INTRODUCTION

There were several significant upheavals in Vietnamese history. Many reform-thinking patriots proposed measures to carry out reforms to help the country develop. Vietnamese education reform is one of the patriotic activities of the Vietnamese people that appeared in this period to “study and work” with the desire to solve the crisis of the era.

The reform of education in Vietnam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was initiated by patriotic scholars and intellectuals, and was also seen as a means of saving the country from the domination of colonialism. However, the reform of education has not brought the desired results.

Vietnam's educational reform in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century is one of the patriotic activities of the Vietnamese people to “study and work” with the desire to solve the crisis of the era. Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc is a typical phenomenon of educational reform in Vietnam. Although it only existed for a short time (from March to November 1907), Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc has left a valuable legacy of the spirit and content of educational reform. In which, it is highlighted with valuable historical experiences in educational reform: improving people's knowledge; overcoming conservative and backward obstacles; implementing "universal education"; innovative thinking and educational methods.

Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc was the first educational revolution in Vietnam. The tide of patriotism of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc proves that Vietnam is the first Asian country to follow the Duy Tan path of Japan, to absorb Western civilization, and to

use measures of national education to raise people's intellectual standards, reform society, and proceed to realize a strong country and wealthy people. The educational revolution conducted by Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc has written a shining page in the history of Vietnamese education. Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc "really did the first educational revolution, with a large scale and advanced character never before seen in Vietnamese history, is not just a school, but in fact a movement. Patriotic revolution aimed at liberating society and the nation from colonial feudalism" (Nguyen Hai Hoanh, 2017)

Nguyen Viet Ngac, author of the article *Thinking more about Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc* said it is necessary to reconsider the relationship between the literal Dong Kinh with the Duy Tân movements in the North, the Central and the Minh Tân movement in the South. He said that there is a misunderstanding about the relationship between the true Dong Kinh and other organizations in the Duy Tan movement in Central Vietnam. In addition, author Nguyen Viet Ngac (2017) also needs to review the ultimate purpose of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc “Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc was established to publicly fight for the ultimate goal of national independence under the democratic flag, not the cultural reform movement”.

Referring to the founder of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc, the author Nguyen Hien Le (2000) said that Tay Ho (Phan Chau Trinh) was the paver for the Duy Tan movement in his home country. Establishing Nghia Thuc was a big part of his work, he caused a new thought in Quang Nam. He went everywhere with his lectures, advised people to cut hair, to complete baccalaureate and then trade, he was the first person to give up the custom of dyeing teeth, dressing in European clothes with local goods. When Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc was established, Phan Chau Trinh accepted to be an ordinary teaching participant.

Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc is the self-awareness movement of the Vietnamese intellectuals in the early twentieth century (Nguyen Giang, 2018). It was only until the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc movement (1917) that the National Language was accepted "wholeheartedly" to promote national ideology. Therefore, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc in the Central and the North was the self-awakening movement of the Confucians to

not be abandoned by the times. However, the political significance of the movement was to remove guilt in the end to gain a linguistic means of self-improvement. Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc has also promoted the creation of a national bourgeois generation using the National Language, who will make a great contribution to the independence of the future (Nguyen Giang, 2018).

From the perspective of educational reform, Vu Van Dung (2015) stated that the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc movement in the early twentieth century is considered as one of the patriotic movements with many educational reform activities actively contribute to the education of the country. The movement has successfully dropped out of former school and followed the new school. The purpose of the movement is to raise the people's knowledge, to train human resources to fight for independence and build a rich and strong country.

II. DONG KINH NGHIA THUC – A TYPICAL MOVEMENT IN VIETNAMESE EDUCATION REFORM IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

The reform of Vietnamese education in the late nineteenth century was in the line of national renewal, the first questioner was Nguyen Truong To, in the early twentieth century there was the emergence of a neo-trend with the representative being Phan Boi Chau, Phan Chau Trinh with the slogan “Open awareness - Make the will prosper - Make the life of the people comfortable”.

Vietnam's educational reform activities appeared in the context of the country being invaded and ruled by the French colonialists, and the Nguyen dynasty surrendered. In the process of proposing national renewal in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Vietnamese intellectuals have been campaigning for reform in many fields: economy, culture, education, military. About education reform, Nguyen Truong To proposes that practical learning, must replace the old useless education in the way from studying for a degree that he called "pragmatic learning". In the history of Vietnamese education, Nguyen Truong To fired the first shot at Confucian's academic education system. He proposed educational reform in the form of acquiring Western education models. Nguyen Truong To proposes a new educational approach, arguing that: “It is necessary to find practical learning, divide it into faculties and subjects, give more rewards to those who take part in the exams, these subjects to encourage gradually bring about beneficial results, then the worst will gradually disappear” (Truong Ba Can, 1988, p.251). According to him, studying military, law, finance, commerce, construction, farming, weaving and other new things could eventually be for a rich country. He proposed to establish major agronomy, astronomy, geography, handicraft, jurisprudence in the national talent training program. If those education reforms are implemented, a contingent of scientifically qualified personnel will be

gradually trained to actively participate in the economic reform process towards modern production).

Nguyen Truong To's ways of education focus on overcoming the shortcomings of Confucian learning, such as promoting moral and political education, underestimating the application of economic practices, and science. He emphasized the urgency of building a pragmatic scholarship to meet the new requirements of the times, not to mention moral and personality education (Le Thi Lan, 2008). The thinking of Nguyen Truong To had certain influences on the educational reform thought of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc in the early twentieth century. At the same time, this was also the period when Japan emerged as a strange phenomenon of the East because, thanks to the reform, it gained great attraction to the advanced patriotic scholars of Vietnam. In 1906, Phan Chau Trinh went to Japan to witness first-hand the important innovations of Europeanization. A large number of strong-willed scholars from many Asian countries also come here to learn the unique lessons of Japan (Dinh Xuan Lam, editor, 2005, p. 626).

In 1906, Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chau Trinh visited Khanh Ung Nghia Thuc in Tokyo. At the end of 1906, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc was established in Hanoi. The purpose of the school was to enhance patriotism, national pride and the will to progress for the masses of people; spread Western learning and civilization; coordinated action with the feudal intellectual who went abroad and supported the Dong Du and Duy Tan movements which were thriving throughout the country.

Nominally, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc is a school, in reality, however, it is not merely a school. In fact, in addition to the responsibility of campaigning to save the country, it also plays a progressive role in the campaign for educational reform in Vietnam in the early years of the twentieth century following the democratic trend in the new era. Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc's outstanding achievement in educational innovation is to promote the national language, boldly used in teaching, compiling, translating, and composing ... quickly put the script to penetrate the social fields and become the national script.

In March, 1907, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc opened in Hanoi. The school did not charge fees, teaching materials and propaganda are distributed to students. Operating funding is based on the arbitrary contributions of the people; teacher did not receive a salary at the first time. The school apparatus consists of 4 departments: Education (opening classes and teaching), Tu Thu (preparing teaching materials and propagating), Cheerleading (propaganda), Finance (funding). The school teaches subjects, such as: national language, Chinese characters (for reading new letters only), French, social general knowledge, history, geography, politics, economics, and citizenship. The school has its own organ, Dai Viet Tan Newspaper; a library of many books and articles with the lending procedure that only needs to read and return it; a letter box to solicit people's comments on school construction...

Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc was enthusiastically responded and supported by the people. The number of students increased from about a dozen at first after a few months to several thousand, and continued to increase. Many Confucian and Western intellectuals volunteered to teach, such as the two most famous Westerners at that time, Nguyen Van Vinh and Pham Duy Ton, who helped teach French. Phan Chau Trinh, from Quang Nam to Hanoi, gave a speech to propagandize Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc.

It can be said that the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc movement is the first handshake in the national history holding the two forces of learning in a new way and learning in an old way. Because they all have the same ideal of how to improve the people, expand the people, train talents for the country and contribute to the elimination of outdated academic education, building a new, progressive education, bringing the nation's evolution.

The new education they advocated is, first and foremost, to create a useful class of people. Therefore, the curriculum of the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc, in addition to providing general knowledge for learners, also directs learners to experiment. To accomplish the purpose, innovators in Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc saw that "National language is the first advantage to open the people of knowledge", and they aroused a movement to learn the national language, popularize the national language in all classes of people, replacing Chinese characters, Southern characters (Vuong Tam, 2012).

Although Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc and the Nghia Thuc movement in Vietnam in the early twentieth century were more or less influenced by the Keio Gijuku model of school establishment purposes, but when put in specific circumstances in Vietnam, we found that Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc and Nghia Thuc established in the suburbs of Hanoi, Nam Dinh, Thai Binh ... are not simply a school to teach new things, open awareness, but it plays the role of a patriotic organization, Nghia Thuc movement and Duy Tan are significant in the history of the Vietnamese nation (Dao Thu Van, 2014, p.59).

Outstanding in the ideas given by the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc movement is the thought "savvy knowledge" - Open-mindedness to the people. Thought emphasizes, in order to "make people strong in knowledge", education is the first national policy. It is necessary to civilize the whole country, bring the thoughts of the old people together with modern knowledge to make real results (Vuong Tam, 2012). In order to "make the whole country civilized, there must be universal education", "no one in the whole country cannot go to school".

The educational objective given by the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc movement is to study for the benefit of oneself and for the nation and society. There are three things, one is to learn hygiene, that is to learn the method of making the body strong and free from disease. The second is student management, ie learning methods to make food, clothing and property management; the third is to learn to be a human being, to be a

good person for a nation, that is to learn how to self-control and treat the nation and society. It can be said that the scholars of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc were really ahead of their time, because it was not until 100 years later that Jacques Delors (head of the International Committee for Education of the 21st century) summarized into 3 concepts of modern education. Besides, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc introduced the policy of "to expand your knowledge, first of all, it is necessary to focus on officials and talented soldiers" (Vuong Tam, 2012).

III. SOME LESSONS LEARNED

During the nine months of existence (March 1907 - November 1907), Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc had outlined good prospects for the country's education. Unfortunately, in the view of the French colonialists, who governed Vietnam between (state the start year) and (state the end year of French colonial rule) it was a danger to them. The French colonial government stated that Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc "is no longer a myth in asserting that Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc was a violent furnace in North Vietnam" (Dinh Xuan Lam, ed., 2005, p. 636). Although it only existed for a short time, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc has left a valuable legacy of the spirit and content of educational reform.

1. Improve people's knowledge, overcome old and conservative old ones, and implement "universal education"

In the context that the national liberation work did not have a way out, the French colonialists were enslaving our people with the policy of ignorance, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc's educational reform activities are very meaningful. This is a step to improve the people's knowledge, equip all classes of people with the most necessary knowledge to renew society in all aspects of economics, politics, science and technology, making people rich in the country. Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc chose to reform national education as a measure to prepare the revolutionary forces as a wise choice at that time - according to Phan Chau Trinh's line "Open awareness - Make the will prosper - Make the life of the people comfortable. Educational reform is the implementation of the motto "self-civilization" (Nguyen Van Khanh, 2017, p.11-21). If the old education used Chinese characters, with the classical knowledge of Confucianism, ancient literature dating back thousands of years, away from the social reality, not useful for economic development, politics, science, which have left serious sequelae in the hearts of Vietnamese society, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc's educational reform activities focused on improving people's knowledge, "how can a country be strong or weak itself! A country that is strong or weak is due to the people. There have never been a weak people but a strong country... If you want the country to be equal but wish to have a good king, it is not as good as hoping in a strong people. If people are strong, a weak country can turn into a strong and long-term strong" (Vu Van Sach, Vu Thi Minh Huong, Philippe Papin, 1997, p.57).

The educational reform of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc was like a new wind blowing an old house which has collapsed

according to the Confucian model of China. "Today, the theory of heaven alone is enough to hinder the will of our nation to compete. Destiny is what does not come but comes. The gentleman who know his destiny know that harm cannot be avoided, and cannot enjoy benefits, but what is worth doing should be done. Therefore, the destiny is to advise, even knowing that a person without will, when having a job, he may pray to heaven for help, and if the job is ruined, they will blame God" (Vu Van Clean, Vu Thi Minh Huong, Philippe Papin Ibid, p. 26). Dong Kinh's educational reform activities have created a new breakthrough by denying the late Nguyen dynasty educational system, at the same time opening a new horizon for Vietnamese educational thinking.

The policy of "universal education" of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc is unique. The way of national education is "clarify the correlation between the country and the people, so that they know their position in society, what their position is, and how to create a sense of patriotism, fostering talent for autonomy and independence. A country without national education, hundreds of families will be dulling, do not know what the nation and politics are" (Vu Van Clean, Vu Thi Minh Huong, Philippe Papin, ibid, p.46). The object of education is the entire population, regardless of age, young, boy and girl. Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc encourages women to go to school to study. The enduring power of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc spreads across the provinces of North Vietnam. "The school's rumor will open all over Hanoi, from one person's mouth to another. Everyone looks forward to the opening day of the school to see what the country's first honor is" (Nguyen Hien Le, 2000, p.53). To attract people the school does not collect tuition fees, does not collect students' materials, and even provides accommodation for disadvantaged students. The school has a head office as permanent residence and accommodation for some of the extremely poor students. The classrooms are temples or large houses borrowed from the private sector (Chuong Thau, 2007, p.7-14).

In addition, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc also focuses on the topic of education. The education of Vietnam in the past was stereotyped by China, put morality first, consider intellect as secondary, so do not mention national education ... Only those who want to be mandarins, and great masters can go to school, it is not national education to popularize among the people, but rather the upper and lower discernment, politeness. The way of national education is not like that, but it is to clarify the correlation between the country and the people, so that they know their position in society, what their position is, and how to create a sense of patriotism, fostering talent for autonomy and independence... A country without national education, hundreds of families will be dulling, do not know what the nation and politics are (Nguyen Hai Hoanh, 2017).

Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc proposed to study not because of degrees, "just studying to be the good person, not studying because of diplomas, which was the only one left in the old days, at that time we hated it very much" (assistant principal Nguyen Quyen). Historian Chuong Thu commented: For the

first time in history, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc has successfully separated examinations from education. Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc shouted, "We teenagers must try our best to learn what is useful, don't let the system of former competition-examinations destroy our interest." If you keep learning the old way, "our country will be difficultly prosperous" (Nguyen Hai Hoanh, 2017).

Putting scientific knowledge into social life, Dong Kinh meaning has made an important change in the cognitive way of thinking of Vietnamese people who are used to seeing things based on predetermined patterns. Through the introduction of general knowledge, information about natural sciences, technical sciences, cultural movements at the beginning of the century, readers have gradually become acquainted with analytical thinking, describing the objects in a specific way, close to reality. The creation of a new habit of enjoying is very important to the process of perceiving things and phenomena, and has the effect of gradually changing the way of feeling, thinking in the Eastern style towards a way of thinking that perceives reality, analyzing phenomena of the West. This is very necessary in creating a habit of thinking that comes from reality, with a scientific basis for Vietnamese people (Cao Thi Hao, 2008).

2. Educational innovation is to innovate in student-centered thinking and methods

Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc's ideological reform of education was aimed at revolutionizing the subjects, purposes and methods of education. From only educating a few people to educating the majority of the people. In the past, the task of education only to train officials today has shifted to training citizens, at the same time, from voluntary education to compulsory education; from only studying in the country to studying abroad.

This allowed students to discuss freely, without being harsh, without being able to do anything. Then add some lessons on French math and National language script so that what students learn and take exams is not contrary to what they actually have to do" (Phan Ngoc Lien, 2006, p.123). The teacher required an ability and a mind to advise learners, guide the methods for learners to access knowledge and self-study, not to do tasks for learners and not to offend student dignity. During the lesson, the teacher raises the problem for learners to solve the problem. Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc has applied a series of new teaching methods, with many vivid forms such as; lecturing, reading newspapers, commentary, lectures and extracurricular talks about news or science to arouse talent, creativity, stimulate students' enthusiasm.

The educational reform of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc is an educational revolution. Its success is in building educational content in line with the development trend of the era; associating theoretical thinking with scientific thinking; attach knowledge to life, associate school with society; identifying learners is at the heart of the educational process.

Regarding educational thinking, on the basis of criticizing the old, conservative and stagnant Confucian ideology, Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc initiated a renewal of thinking and methods in the era-appropriate knowledge approach. To absorb the Western educational model and select the positive elements of the old education system in order to propose a training program with quite rich content, associated with reality.

The thought of educational innovation in the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc movement has raised many problems about educational methods, such as learners must have the spirit of self-study, self-study, know how to ask problems, and propose new ideas; Diversify methods to suit each object and each subject. Through education, learners not only learn a culture or apprenticeship suitable for their forte, but also have the ethics, thinking and knowledge necessary to be a good citizen and useful to society.

IV. CONCLUSION

Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc belonged to the Duy Tân movement and, more narrowly, in the Vietnamese patriotic education flow in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Up to now, more than 110 years have passed, but the progressive educational ideology of the Dong Kinh movement still has profound implications for the fundamental and comprehensive innovation policy of education and training of the Party and State of Vietnam. One of the factors that ensures success in this career is to treasure history, pay attention to inherit the rational elements of educational ideas in the past - including the thought of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc (Chung Thi Van Anh, 2018).

Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc shows a strong will of self-reliance, his spirit is determined to oppose the power of bondage, so it has attracted the support of many people. Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc not only stopped at a pure school, but was actually this was a political ideological movement, preparing for the national liberation revolution and democracy in the new era. Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc has contributed to building a patriotic education, a modern education with new content and methods. For the first time, there was a movement to openly criticize outdated Confucian feudal ideas, to absorb new, civilized and progressive ideas, in line with the development of the era.

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