

## EFFECTS OF FUKUZAWA YUKICHI'S EDUCATIONAL IDEOLOGIES ON IDEOLOGICAL CHANGES OF PHAN BOI CHAU

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**Abstract:** Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835 - 1901), a Japanese radical ideologist in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, was a pioneer of the education modernization in Japan. His educational ideologies were not limited in Japanese territory but went beyond Japanese border. Together with New Books (Tân Thư), New Literature (Tân Văn), Fukuzawa Yukichi's educational ideologies were introduced to Vietnam and they created ideological changes in Confucian scholars, particularly Phan Boi Chau, during the early years of the twentieth century. Phan Boi Chau realized that the only way to independence was to improve intellectual level of the people and strengthen national potentials. The ideological changes of Phan Boi Chau created uniqueness in the history of ideological flow in Vietnam, contributing to the struggle for national liberation.

**Keywords:** Ideological changes, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Confucian scholars, Phan Boi Chau, educational ideologies.

### **Introduction:**

Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835 - 1901), a Japanese radical ideologist in the late nineteenth century, was a pioneer of education modernization, a foundation for the quantum leap of Japan. His greatness was shown in his comprehensive reform ideologies in almost all sectors like economics, politics, and sociality. His innovative ideologies, especially the ones on education, were shown in countless works that he wrote and published from 1866 to 1899 like: “Tây dương sự tình” (Things Western) (1866-1870), “Khuyến học” (An Encouragement of Learning) (1872-1876), “Thoát Á luận (Escape from Asia) (1885), “Phúc ông tự truyện (The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi)” (1899). With his significant contributions to Japan, the Japanese people called him “the Japanese version of Voltaire” who brought spirit, motivation, and spiritual support to the Innovation of Emperor Meiji (1868 - 1912).

The effects of Fukuzawa Yukich's educational ideologies were not limited within the Japanese society at that time but went beyond Japanese border and had great impact on neighboring countries and worldwide. Vietnam, a country with the same Asian culture, was influenced greatly by those ideologies. By many methods and in different forms, the Innovation's ideologies in general and Fukuzawa Yukichi's educational ideologies in particular

were widely adopted by Vietnamese scholars, especially Phan Boi Chau, at the turn of the twentieth century. Phan Boi Chau (1867 - 1940) was the most outstanding leader of the national liberation in Vietnam at the beginning of the twentieth century. He was born to a scholar-gentry family in a poor region where a lot of heroes and great people were born and raised. The formation of Phan Boi Chau's ideology was associated with his revolutionary activities and the outstanding events in his life. He gained most of his achievements during the time when he was living and working in Japan. This effect not only contributed to significant changes in his perspective and ideology but it was turned into action in the Innovation Movement. Those changes were a foundation to connect two important periods which were vital to the success of the revolutionary movements in Vietnam later on.

### **1. Fukuzawa Yukichi's Educational Ideologies**

By learning from the quintessence of the traditional education of Japan, combing with the reform trends in the world, Fukuzawa Yukichi proposed modern education reform ideologies that were suitable with the development of the world's civilization. Education reform, together with other kinds of reforms, gave Japan an education system that was modern and suitable with a modernized and industrialized society. It contributed greatly to eliminate the feudal remnants and eradicate the demerits of the traditional education system, "reinforce" a new democratic trend in Japan.

Fukuzawa Yukichi proposed his ideas on the important role of education as the key to civilization for Japan. By criticizing the inequality in society, he made his logical statement at the beginning of the book "Khuyến học" (An Encouragement of Learning) that "heaven created no man above another and no man below another" [2, page 24]. This sentence was inspired by the United States Declaration of Independence by Jefferson<sup>1</sup> [7, page 70] as a declaration on human equality. Everyone was born equal with the same status regardless of gender, low or high social rank, being poor or rich. There is no such thing that one can give himself the right to be above all or trample the natural rights of other people. "We are born equal but if we look at the actual living conditions of people, we will see that there are gaps between the rich and the poor and that some are stupid while other are wise. The reason for that is the struggle and methods to study of each and every one of us is different. [8, page 250]. However, he realized that there were different kinds of people: some were masters while others were slaves. On a broader scale, it's the inequality between nations. The Western countries invaded the Eastern world because they had higher education level. To explain this, Fukuzawa Yukichi looked for the cause in a self-manners training book "Thực ngữ giáo" (A Book of Real Manners) that all the inequalities between people were due to differences in education level. Thus he emphasized the importance

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jefferson (1743 - 1826) was the third president of the United States. He organized the Democratic-Republican Party. He was one of the biggest followers of modern liberality.

of education and the personal struggles that could change one's destiny. Heaven created mankind but heaven did not create their lives. A man's life is built by his own hands. This ideology has corrected the Confucian concept on "Thiên mệnh" (God's will) and on the arrangement of unnatural forces. On a broader scale, Fukuzawa Yukichi saw that in nations' point of view "The Japanese people are like the English. They all are human, born under the same heaven so there is no morality for people of one country to invade the rights of the other's. No morality allows one person to hurt another. And there is no morality for a group of people to invade the rights of others'. That concept is true to every circumstance and does not depend on majority or minority." [2, page 50]. Thus, all of them must be equal. This also means if there is some threat that might infringe upon a person's natural rights, then that person should not hesitate even to take up arms against all the threat to protect his rights.

Moreover, he stated that the improvement in education and intellectual level of people was the savior for Japan against being dependent. Based on that inequality, Fukuzawa Yukichi proposed innovative ideologies on education. Only education brought fairness and happiness to our people and civilization to our country. Fukuzawa Yukichi stated that education was the only way to reach civilization. In other words, Japanese people needed to determine their purpose of learning. Education was the key for people to change their view of life and stabilize their social status and function.

The core of Fukuzawa Yukichi's educational ideologies is practical learning and education is to resolve actual needs of the society. It should be kept in mind that Fukuzawa Yukichi understood deeply about Sinology but he "did not worship Sinology and he didn't put Sinology in an important position" [1, page 293]. Thus he always criticized and pointed out the demerits of Sinology. Above all, Fukuzawa Yukichi realized that the conservative Confucian ideology was the cause that prevented the introduction of Western civilization.

Based on the actual education status of Japan at that time, Fukuzawa Yukichi strongly criticized the "*hư học*" (*fake study*) (meaning the way of study that didn't focus on the content and just copy the old things from Chinese Confucianism, not practical with the actual status of the country. He wrote: "What is study? It's not learning to understand difficult sentence or words; it's not learning to explain the meaning of ancient literature, to read and make comments on poems. That kind of study is of no help in life. Reading literature works is to encourage ourselves and that's definitely a useful subject in life. I do not think that literature is so important that we "have to worship it" as the teachers of Chinese literature always emphasize. In fact, I do not see many teachers of Chinese literature have valuable properties. It's very rare for a businessman to be good at poem and literature and succeed in business at the same time. With the current way of study, it only adds to the worries of parents, famers, and so on who are desperate for the study of their children. [2, page 26].

Via Fukuzawa Yukichi's comments on Chinese literature and his strong criticism on fake study, we can clearly see that that education system is impractical and no good to the lives of

people. On the contrary, it kills our capacity of being independent and our creativity and it does not resolve the urgent needs of the country. According to Fukuzawa Yukichi, to resolve fake study, we must apply practical learning at once to approach national modernization.

In other words, the method that Fukuzawa Yukichi proposed was *Jitsugaku* (practical learning), adopting Western culture to develop the country and reinforcing national independence. This was an advanced way of learning which enhanced creativity and positive and comprehensive thinking. While the old studying method only gave learners passivation and dogma thinking, practical learning encouraged activation and urge to find new things. Fukuzawa Yukichi thought that *Jitsugaku* not only brought independence for individuals but independence and freedom to Japan as a whole.

With sensitive mindset, Fukuzawa Yukichi realized that it was necessary to learn the subjects that are useful in life. He said that “firstly, we must learn forty-seven Japanese kana letters, methods of accounting and the abacus, the way to use weights and measures. Geography gives us knowledge on Japanese whether conditions and countries in the world. Physics helps us distinguish characteristics of natural objects, and then know their uses. History helps us know deeply about events in the flow of history, thus we can study the past and presence of a country. Economics helps us resolve issues related to spending in each family as well as the financial status of a country. Ethics gives us knowledge on our own actions and behaviors between people.” [2, page 24-25].

In order to be able to learn those subjects, Fukuzawa Yukichi proposed two necessary things to a student. The first thing was to read all European books that were translated to Japanese. Especially, he emphasized that it’s better to read books in English, French, and German. This will help readers avoid being influenced by the translator’s point of view. The second thing was to comprehend basics of each subject, and then understand fundamental nature of all objects. To do these two things, learners must be serious, wholeheartedly seek the truth, be studious and willing to explore the knowledge of human. In other words, “*practical learning*” is the knowledge that all people must have, the education that each man must equip himself with regardless of social ranks, status, and gaps between the rich and the poor. The appreciation of practical learning, according to Fukuzawa Yukichi was the way to lead Japan to civilization and prosper. Thus, each individual must be aware of his responsibility in learning and equip himself with knowledge to reach the goal “Only when individual is independent can the country be independent, only then that the country is independent.” [2, page 25].

Besides, Fukuzawa Yukichi also proposed his idea on independent manner education. Independent people, according to Fukuzawa Yukichi, will affect the existence of the country. He criticized that people in Shōgun time were stupid, sybaritic, and lacked of independence. The country’s civilization cannot depend on the government but we must take care of each citizen. Each citizen must be responsible for protecting the country and defending its independence. Although, the government had issued a lot of innovative methods, the human factor was never

paid the right attention to. Besides, Fukuzawa Yukichi emphasized the adoption of knowledge, knowledge, and science of the Western world but remained Japanese distinct culture characteristics. History has shown that, Fukuzawa Yukichi's educational ideologies have contributed greatly to the education reform in the modernization trend of the country.

It can be said that the effects of Fukuzawa Yukichi's educational ideologies in particular and and Duy Tân Minh Trị (Meiji Restoration) in general was not limited in Japan but it was spread out to the world. The success in Meiji Restoration helped Japan become the second strongest country in the world within less than half a century. Although Japan conducted the close-door policy like Vietnam before 1858. This is explained by many reasons but we cannot deny the big role of a group of people who kept up with the time, representing the newly born bourgeoisie in Japan, a bridge to connect two eras.

## **2. Effect of Fukuzawa Yukichi's Educational Ideologies to Ideological Changes of Phan Boi Chau**

Obviously, the success of Meiji Restoration affected many nations in Asia. Like Japanese scholars, when the Western countries were having the thought of invading Vietnam, the Vietnamese scholars realized the need of innovation in all aspects. These advanced people had shown their point of view on how to get Vietnam out of Western invasion risk based on the lessons of Japan. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, they were one of a few people who were capable of adopting and organizing patriotic movements. Wanted it or not, they accepted the mission of the history. In the new context of the country and the world's situation, especially the changes in Eastern Asia, the advanced Confucian scholar realized that there was a need to change strategy. In the process of finding a way to save Vietnam, scholars like Phan Chau Trinh, Huynh Thuc Khang, Tran Quy Cap, and so on had determined that intellectual level of the people and their spirit were the most important factors.

While in the nineteenth century, some scholars had the thought of reform ideologies, in the twentieth century, under the effects of new changes in historical context, there were new forms and contents of ideologies in Vietnam. As usual, the criticism of the actual status of Vietnam those days was the foundation for Confucian scholars to develop innovative ideologies. Firstly, the criticized the out-of-date aspects of Confucianism. As the standard ideology of the Feudalism, Confucianism had some certain contributions to the development the power-centered feudalism system in Vietnam. However, still the end of the nineteenth century, Confucianism was one of the important reasons that made Confucian patriotic scholars couldn't find the right way to save the country. This was also a historical merit for Confucian scholars in the nineteenth century. Besides, the scholars also criticized Confucianism on the thought of God's will as it said all the existence in life was created by heaven. They realized that this ideology itself was preventing human awareness and eliminated the natural creativity of human.

This criticism means that those Confucian scholars were gradually realizing the merits of Confucianism and its bad effects.

The criticism of Confucian scholars was not just in the unsuitability of Confucianism but it was shown in the society and the education of colonial feudal education. Via poems and literature works, they directly criticized all aspects of social life. The unfairness, inequality of the society was the obvious things in the out-of-date Confucian society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Like Fukuzawa Yukichi's view point in "Khuyến học" (An Encouragement of Learning) "heaven created no man above another and no man below another" [2, page 24], the Confucian scholars soon realized the main cause of that situation was human. Human created imbalances in the society. In addition, the human nature living in a hierarchy society was changed, creating more bad habits. The thousand-year-old Confucianism had classified the society into four classes: gentry scholars, farmers, craftsmen, and traders. Obviously, in Vietnam's history, there was never a time when the society was criticized that badly. "This criticism showed not only their dignity but also their sharpness and innovation of their thinking" [3, page 107].

**Colonialism** was also the object for Confucian scholars to criticize. With the cruel policies and subtle tricks of the colonists, the Confucian scholars realized that it was their responsibility to expose the true colors of the colonists and encouraged the spirit of anti-invaders of the people. The innovationists Huynh Thuc Khang had exact understanding of French colonist's skin "The policy of dividing the country into three States to make it easier to control, creating different regimes in the same country and appraising one side while ignoring the other in order to separate its people. In just a few years, the Southerners called Centralists "the tale-tellers", and the Northerners "the crooker", while the Northern and Central people called the Southerners "Dongnaians". People of the same country treated one another as if they were from a different country. This skin of eliminating patriotism and destroying the united process of Vietnam was so crafty" [3, page 109].

Together with Huynh Thuc Khang, Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chau Trinh strongly criticized colonialism. Phan Boi Chau was well aware of the French colonists' artifice and nature when they used obscurantism and applied the half-colonial and half-feudal education system in Vietnam. This education system was to train henchmen for the colonists. Therefore, the implementation of this policy was strongly objected by the Vietnamese people, especially the scholars. However, they had different notations of and ways of criticizing this policy. This only diversified the innovative ideologies at that time.

By criticizing Confucianism, feudal and colonial society and education system, together with the influence of New Literature (Tân Văn), New Books (Tân Thư), the Confucian scholars proposed their innovative ideas. Altogether, innovative ideologies of scholars discussed politics, society, educations, and ethics. In that sense, the most outstanding person of that time was Phan Boi Chau.

His original understanding of Japan was probably through Nguyen Lo Trach's ideology and the Chinese New Books (*Tân Thư*), that were introduced to Vietnam but the event that had strongest impact on him was the victory of Japan in the Russia-Japan War in 1904 – 1905. He wrote “Not long after that, there was gun fire in Liaodong whose echo was so great that we could hear clearly. The victory of Japan in the Japan-Russia battle benefits us a lot. Our mind was open to a new world” [5, page 171]; He even emphasized that “ever since I left Vietnam, my mind has started to change but it cannot be denied that it is the Russia-Japan war that has a strong impact on our minds” [5, page 171]. That great victory of Japan had changed all ideologies of the scholars in Vietnam and in Asia on the belief that the Asian nations could restore their independence and sovereignty. The big colored-skin brother became a great example for the patriots in Vietnam to learn experience to fight off their enemy. A proof for that was Phan Boi Chau and his partners in Reform Society<sup>2</sup> included Japan in their plan to seek reinforcements. This was recorded in the book “*Niên Biểu*” (*Annual Schedule*): “Japan is the only advanced country among the colored nations who fought off Russia whose ambition was so strong. If we come to Japan and show all the merits and demerits to it, Japan shall reinforce us. Even though Japan might not send their soldiers, it will be willing to help us to buy weapons or lend weapons to us” [6, page 77]. Similarly, in “*Ngục trung thư*” (*A Book Written in Prison*) also noted: “At that time, Japan was rising and they are colored like us. They might want to rein Asian area, so they can help us to eliminate European strength which also benefits them. If we express our heartfelt feelings to them, they would lend us some weapons or at least help us to buy them. All members have come to the same agreement. We planned to send a representative to Japan to take care of weapon issue” [5, page 173]. The leaders of Reform Society discussed and agreed to send Phan Boi Chau to Japan to accomplish that mission.

So, the original purpose of Phan Boi Chau as well as Reform Society was “to go abroad to seek reinforcements” (to seek for weapons). They realized that: “since guns were invented, all weapons so-called swords have been trash. The thing that they used to make spear out of trees to fight off Qin and Chu is of no use nowadays. We should bear in mind that the French's weapons are thousands times better than ours.. Any riffle in our hand is in control of French captains” [5, pages 169-170]. Thus, there was no other way but to go to Japan and seek for weapons.

Early in 1905, Phan Boi Chau, Tang Bat Ho, and Dang Tu Kinh went to Japan. Fukuzawa Yukichi had passed away 4 years before then. Fukuzawa Yukichi's career and famous works still had strong impact on Japanese society. That was the chance for Phan Boi Chau to explore the valuable innovative ideologies of Fukuzawa Yukichi. The most famous work of

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<sup>2</sup> Around 1904, Phan Boi Chau and his partners organized Viet Nam Reform Society (Viet Nam Duy Tân hội) and drew an operation plan including: Firstly, to enhance the plan of the Society, we must recruit more members and collect more operation fee, some of which would be spent on documents. Secondly, after surviving the commotion, we shall prepare documents at once to continue to operate. Thirdly, how should we go and seek for reinforcements?

Fukuzawa Yukichi was “Khuyến học” (An Encouragement of Learning) really attracted Phan Boi Chau’s attention. The ideas in that book guided Phan Boi Chau to implement his plans. This was noted in the letter sent to Vietnam “*Khuyến quốc dân tư trợ du học văn*” (A Work to Encourage People to Study) (1905) of Phan Boi Chau: “Shall we follow the noble reform movement of Mr. Yoshida Shihin and Mr. Fukuzawa Yukichi? If we do not implement innovation, we shall be slaves for our enemy or wasting our time waiting for foreigners to help us? If we don’t take care of ourselves, we shall be bullied by foreigners forever! Like Confucian said: “do not rush, do not be greedy with little benefits, rush hardly bear fruit; being greedy with little benefits hardly makes great achievements”. My countrymen! Think it through!” [4, page 40].

When he stepped foot on Japan, Phan Boi Chau met important politicians of Japanese Parliament at that time. When Phan Boi Chau failed to seek for reinforcements from Japan, he had gained new knowledge. To fight off the enemy, the important factor is to be prepared physically and spiritually, meaning to say to create a strong foundation of “mindset of the people, spirit of the people, and talented people.” Japan is a good place to carry out that preparation: “I must go to Japan this time. It should be a shame on be to quit a job that the Party has assigned. There are two things that I can do to redeem myself. The first thing if I shall be allowed to go abroad again, it will calm our members down and we don’t have to worry about the risks coming. The second thing is when I share with our people what I see and hear, it might benefit for our future work” [5, pages 184-185].

Obviously, Phan Boi Chau’s understanding had changed from seeking reinforcements from Japan to using Japan as a foundation to carry out revolution movements. It can be said that it was the first but very vital for his activities later on.

The strategic change of Phan Boi Chau was not only a proof of the effects of the ideological trends at that time and external ideologies but also showed the real needs of the country. This also proved the effects of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s educational ideologies on Phan Boi Chau.

The ideological changes in Phan Boi Chau were also shown in his works, especially the ones that were composed during the time when he was in Japan (1905 - 1909). Most importantly, although he was refused when he proposed his idea on the reinforcements, Phan Boi Chau did not deny the achievements of Japan. This is clearly shown in some outstanding works follow:

In “*Hải ngoại huyết thư*” (Overseas Book inscribed in blood) (1906), Phan Boi Chau pointed out some of modern innovative ideologists like Rousseau, Fukuzawa Yukichi, and so on. The ideologies of predecessors were the guidance for the national freedom movement in Vietnam. Whether the country could gain its independence or not depends mostly on its people, who are the core forces of the revolution. Therefore, he told people to:

“Hạ đăng sáng khắp mọi nơi  
Bóng sao thấp thoáng, về trời long lanh  
Đài kỷ niệm tranh vanh trong nước  
Đèn hoan nghênh kẻ rước, người đưa  
Nào người Dụ Cát, Lư Thoa  
Nay vừa gặp hội xin ta gắng lòng” [4, page 40]

In this work, Fukuzawa Yukichi was mentioned under the name *Du Cat*, who was considered to be an outstanding ideologist of Japan in Meiji time, just like the French ideological pioneer who had strong impact on French revolutionary bourgeoisie Jean – Jacques Rousseau. Although Phan Boi Chau did not have the chance to meet Fukuzawa Yukichi in person, his innovation ideologies and famous works had strong impact on Phan Boi Chau via books, newspapers, and during the time he was in Japan.

“*Tân Việt Nam*” (*A New Vietnam*) (1907) – a work that was written with Phan Boi Chau’s most optimistic spirit. He described Vietnam as an image of Japan at that time. Phan Boi Chau believed that “Vietnam in the future will be exactly like Japan nowadays.” [4, page 273]. That work was the result of actual observation of all social life aspects of Japan when Phan Boi Chau was in Japan. Therefore, Phan Boi Chau dreamt of a Vietnam where human rights and democracy would prosper.

For Vietnam to be like the model Japan, Phan Boi Chau appealed Vietnamese people to follow Japanese to fulfill their duties to the country. This was shown in details in the poem “*Đề tỉnh quốc dân hồn*” (*Awakening People*) (1907). In this poem, he mentioned the duties of the students studying abroad “Enthusiastic, dynamic, hard-working, and try to gain knowledge from the foreigners to measure and use later on. It’s the duties of students studying abroad” [4, page 89].

Obviously, from Phan Boi Chau’s point of view, Japan was always a good example for Vietnam to follow. Thus, every time he needed proof, it’s always Japan. In “*Việt Nam quốc sử khảo*” (*Vietnam's National History*) (1908), Phan Boi Chau proposed many new definitions on nation, citizen, civil rights, civilization, and so on. The interesting thing in this work is that Phan Boi Chau based on civil right level to classify the social development “Japan, England, France, America are all strong countries meaning the countries where civil rights are highly appreciated. The constitution, ordinance, tax, and consumer are all decided by Parliament and the Parliament is organized by the people.” [4, page 387]. It’s safe to say that all changes in Phan Boi Chau’s ideologies showed the strong impact of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s educational ideologies in particular and his innovation ideologies in general.

Phan Boi Chau mentioned Fukuzawa Yukichi not only during his revolutionary career but also when Phan Boi Chau was in Ben Ngu (Hue). The purpose of education, according to Fukuzawa Yukichi, was to protect national independence, for people to realize their duties as

“citizens”. Fukuzawa Yukichi discussed this thoroughly on “Khuyến học” (An Encouragement of Learning). Phan Boi Chau emphasized “Like the great Confucian of Japan, Mr. Fukuzawa Yukichi used to say, “The soul of a country depends on the people of that country. The soul of a nation depends on its students; Young students, they are the soul of a country” [4, page 41]. Fukuzawa Yukichi realized the important function of human in society. Whether the society develops or not depends mostly on human. Thus, the only way to get to civilization is education.

One of the most important educational ideologies of Fukuzawa Yukichi was to develop practical education. As mentioned above, from this ideology, Fukuzawa Yukichi developed a model of school with practical subjects that are useful in life. Keio University is the best example of his educational ideologies. When visiting this University, Phan Boi Chau had new understanding. He said, “After thousands years, Vietnam is used to being cruel, cheating, suck politics not to mention education. The so-called education is just an examination. Since there is no trading education, our economics degraded; since there is no industrial education, our industrial sector failed; since there is no medical education, our people don’t know how to keep themselves clean; since there is no agricultural education, our people don’t know how to exploit the earth; since there is no law education, our people don’t know how to protect their rights. Stupidity causes weaknesses; laziness causes poverty; we are both weak and poor thus our country is not really a country; we study a two-thousand-year history only to find out we have neither politics nor education.” [6, pages 44-45].

Therefore, we can see that, via his works and his activities, Phan Boi Chau was positively affected by the innovative educational ideologies of Fukuzawa Yukichi. Those ideologies had made significant ideological changes in Phan Boi Chau: from going abroad to seek for reinforcements to adopting the Japanese model; considering Japan to be a model for Vietnam to learn from to reach civilization, modernization; sending Vietnamese teenagers to Japan; organizing and teaching at Dong Kinh Nghia thuc School. All the changes in his ideologies as well as actual actions in revolution showed the effects of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s educational ideologies and the urgent requirements of Vietnam. His career was on a hard course but it played an extremely important role in history of ideology and Vietnam revolution movements.

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