

## PHAN CHAU TRINH'S ETHICAL IDEOLOGY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MORAL EDUCATION AMONG VIETNAM YOUNG GENERATIONS NOWADAYS

Vu Bao Khuyen Bui  <sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The article studies the ideology of Phan Chau Trinh - a representative historical figure in Vietnam at the beginning of the 20th century, with progressive views on ethical reform and national cultural revitalization at that time. Based on an analysis of the core concepts of Phan Chau Trinh's ethical ideology, this article explores the application of these ideas in the current moral education context in Vietnam. Grounded in the theoretical framework of American philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum, this article employs a combination of historical-logical analysis, comparative study, synthesis, and practical investigation. The results form the fundamental directions for moral education in Vietnam, which are comprehensive human training with traditional virtues while open to the moral wisdom of humanity at large; and promoting democratic spirit and critical thinking through liberal education. Given the current status of lifestyle and ideals of young Vietnamese, the article affirms the relevance of Phan Chau Trinh's ideology as a foundation for ethical pedagogy. Its application holds significant potential for improving educational efficiency and training a new generation of citizens equipped to thrive in a globalized world.

**Keywords:** Ethics; Moral education; Young people; Vietnam; Phan Chau Trinh

### A IDEOLOGIA ÉTICA DE PHAN CHAU TRINH E SUAS IMPLICAÇÕES PARA A EDUCAÇÃO MORAL ENTRE AS GERAÇÕES DE JOVENS DO VIETNÃ DE HOJE

### Resumo

O artigo estuda a ideologia de Phan Chau Trinh – uma figura histórica representativa do Vietnã no início do século XX, com visões progressistas sobre reforma ética e revitalização cultural nacional na época. Com base na análise dos conceitos centrais da ideologia ética de Phan Chau Trinh, este artigo explora a aplicação dessas ideias no contexto atual da educação moral no Vietnã. Fundamentado no arcabouço teórico da filósofa americana Martha C. Nussbaum, este artigo emprega uma combinação de análise histórico-lógica, estudo comparativo, síntese e investigação prática. Os resultados formam as direções fundamentais para a educação moral no Vietnã, que são a formação humana abrangente com virtudes tradicionais, ao mesmo tempo em que se abre à sabedoria moral da humanidade em geral; e a promoção do espírito democrático

<sup>1</sup>PhD student, Lecturer at the Faculty of Library and Information Science, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (VNUHCM). Vietnam. E-mail: baokhuyen@hcmussh.edu.vn



e do pensamento crítico por meio da educação liberal. Dada a atual situação do estilo de vida e dos ideais dos jovens vietnamitas, o artigo afirma a relevância da ideologia de Phan Chau Trinh como fundamento da pedagogia ética. Sua aplicação tem um potencial significativo para melhorar a eficiência educacional e formar uma nova geração de cidadãos preparados para prosperar em um mundo globalizado.

**Palavras-chave:** Ética; Educação moral; Jovens; Vietname; Phan Chau Trinh

## LA IDEOLOGÍA ÉTICA DE PHAN CHAU TRINH Y SUS IMPLICACIONES PARA LA EDUCACIÓN MORAL EN LAS JÓVENES GENERACIONES DE VIETNAM EN LA ACTUALIDAD

### Resumen

El artículo estudia la ideología de Phan Chau Trinh, figura histórica representativa de Vietnam a principios del siglo XX, con visiones progresistas sobre la reforma ética y la revitalización cultural nacional en aquel momento. A partir del análisis de los conceptos centrales de la ideología ética de Phan Chau Trinh, este artículo explora la aplicación de estas ideas en el contexto actual de la educación moral en Vietnam. Basado en el marco teórico de la filósofa estadounidense Martha C. Nussbaum, este artículo combina análisis histórico-lógico, estudio comparativo, síntesis e investigación práctica. Los resultados sientan las bases para la educación moral en Vietnam: una formación humana integral con virtudes tradicionales, abierta a la sabiduría moral de la humanidad en general; y la promoción del espíritu democrático y el pensamiento crítico a través de la educación liberal. Dada la situación actual del estilo de vida y los ideales de los jóvenes vietnamitas, el artículo afirma la relevancia de la ideología de Phan Chau Trinh como base de la pedagogía ética. Su aplicación tiene un gran potencial para mejorar la eficiencia educativa y formar una nueva generación de ciudadanos preparados para prosperar en un mundo globalizado.

**Palabras clave:** Ética; Educación moral; Jóvenes; Vietnam; Phan Chau Trinh

### 1. Introduction

In 1858, the French colonialists launched an invasion of Vietnam, making Vietnam a French colony. Under colonial rule, Vietnam underwent a drastic socio-political change in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, moving from a feudal society to a semi-feudal colonial one. This historical situation caused Vietnamese people to live under dual oppression: one side was the French colonial authorities, the other was a decaying feudal regime maintained by the French as a puppet government. The issue of national independence and people's liberation became a historic task for any patriot at that time. Phan Chau Trinh (1872-1926) was one



of the representative patriots who fought tirelessly to awaken the nation to stand up and destroy feudalism and colonialism to liberate the people.

Born during a period of societal transformation, as the East-West cultural encounter progressed more intensely, along with many other patriots, Phan Chau Trinh soon realized the nation's pervasive weakness. He recognized that a comprehensive social change was necessary to strengthen the internal forces, enabling the people to overthrow feudalism and colonialism and move toward a democratic future. Phan Chau Trinh established an ideological system that revolutionized the country through the path of democratization, modernization, and civilization. He believed that national strength must be built upon the empowerment of each individual.

Criticism of the old society also means criticism of feudal ideas and norms born by that society, especially ethics which prioritized obedience and upheld feudal privilege as moral ideals. For Phan Chau Trinh, education in general and moral education in particular for the younger generation are extremely important. It is the foundation for civilization, intellectual awakening that is capable of resisting oppression and building a democratic nation. From this historical experience and ideological reflection, he formed his distinctive views on ethics and moral education of the young generations.

Phan Chau Trinh stands as a representative historical figure associated with the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His legacy left profound insights and enduring lessons on the moral education of young generations. Studying and engaging with his ideology represents a meaningful act of "reflecting on the past to illuminate the present" (*ôn cõi tri tân*), which will provide a valuable perspective for innovating and improving the efficiency of moral education for Vietnam young generations today.

This article will answer the questions: (1) What is the source and core content of Phan Chau Trinh's ideology of ethics? (2) How should the ideological value of Phan Chau Trinh be used to conduct moral education activities for young Vietnamese today?

## 2. Literature review

Scholarly work on Phan Chau Trinh is both extensive and diverse. Within the scope of this article, we would like to summarize into two direct research directions that inform our analysis. The first encompasses studies that examine Phan Chau Trinh's ideological contributions and his role in Vietnam history. The second comprises works that directly analyse his educational ideology, including moral education.

For the first research direction, the book *Phan Chau Trinh and His Political Writing* by Vinh Sinh (Vinh, 2018) brings together Phan Chau Trinh's most famous works such as: *Thư thắt điềú*, *Dân trị chủ nghĩa và quân trị chủ nghĩa* (Democracy and Monarchy), *Đạo đức và luân lý Đông Tây* (Eastern and Western ethics and morality), and *Pháp Việt liên hiệp chi hậu Tân Việt Nam* (Franc-Vietnam alliance and the New Vietnam). The analysis mainly focused on his spirit



of democratic revolution and intellectual enlightenment in the context of Vietnam society at the end of the late 19th and early 20th century. The work "Phan Chau Trinh - the outstanding Vietnam reformer of the XX century" by author Nguyen Van Khanh (Nguyen, 2022), "Find out the point of the democratic of Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chau Trinh" by Tran Mai Uoc (Mai, 2023) examine his role during the first half of the 20th century through analyses of his progressive political views and his unwavering dedication to national liberation.

The article "Main factors influencing the formulation of Phan Chau Trinh's reformist thoughts" by Thanh Thi Trinh (Thi Trinh, 2025) analyzed the factors that formed innovative ideology on Phan Chau Trinh's political career path, including: revolutionary spirit, patriotism, and willingness to learn from the cultural achievements of other civilizations. Notably, in 2022, on the 150th anniversary of the patriot's birth, there was a workshop called "Phan Chau Trinh patriot innovation ideology" in Quang Nam Province, his hometown. The workshop collected many written studies on changes in the political ideology of his capitalist democracy-oriented, the propagation of innovation ideology and the role of Phan Chau Trinh in the early 20th century's socio-cultural reform movement (HTT, 2022).

For the second direction of research, scholars focused on exploring Phan Chau Trinh's idea of education, especially his utilization of educational ideology in educational practice in modern society. Representative works include "Từ tư tưởng "khai dân trí" của Phan Chau Trinh suy nghĩ về đổi mới giáo dục ở nước ta hiện nay (From Phan Chau Trinh's "civilization" ideology to think about educational innovation in our country now) by author Tran Mai Cong (Mai, 2013); "Tư tưởng về giáo dục của Phan Chau Trinh" (Phan Chau Trinh's ideology of education) by Cao Xuan Long (Long, 2015).

There are also several articles comparing Phan Chau Trinh's educational ideology with other philosophers abroad, such as "Similarities in the thought on education of Phan Chau Trinh and Fukuzawa Yukichi" by Cao Xuan Long (Long, 2020), "Tư tưởng giáo dục khai phóng của Wilhelm Von Humboldt và Phan Chau Trinh: Phân tích, so sánh, bình luận" (Educationalist Ideology by Wilhelm Von Humboldt and Phan Trinh: Comparison, Comments) by Tran Minh Hieu (Tran, 2021).

It is evident that most existing articles on Phan Chau Trinh primarily study his vision of national reform and the application of that vision to improving educational effectiveness. However, there appears to be no dedicated article that directly examines the issue of moral education for young generations through the lens of Phan Chau Trinh's ethical ideology. In contrast to previous authors, this article focuses on analyzing the core ethical ideas articulated in Phan Chau Trinh's works. By doing so, we aim to clarify the directions in which his moral ideology can be inherited and applied to the current context of moral education for Vietnamese young generations.

To address the above research questions, this article adopts the theory of Martha C. Nussbaum - a modern American philosopher, to mirror and analyze Phan Chau Trinh's views on morality. The reason for this choice is that, firstly,



as the article aims to apply Phan Chau Trinh's ethical ideology to the context of modern moral education, it is essential to engage with the perspectives of a modern educator. Secondly, although the two authors are from two different historical periods, they share similarities in their views on moral imperative goals. Martha C. Nussbaum emphasizes that in order to train global citizens, ethical education is needed based on liberalization education. She argues for the inclusion of both reason and emotion in the moral development process, where reason serves as the foundation and emotion is understood as a vehicle for moral cognition (Liu, 2014). According to this author, morality is an important foundation of personal consciousness and sustainable development. Moral education here has a mission to serve the community and to uphold justice, rather than being driven by personal achievements and interests. Nussbaum's belief in education as the root of reform, and in moral education as necessarily tied to real-world practice, resonates strongly with Phan Chau Trinh's reformist policy: "Khai dân trí, chấn dân khí, hậu dân sinh" (Enlighten the people, invigorate the will of the people, and improve their livelihood).

### 3. Research methods

Historical-logical method: Studying the political life of Phan Chau Trinh along a chronological axis by systematizing historical documents, thus summarizing the highlights of his revolutionary career.

Document analysis and synthesis: Analyzing Phan Chau Trinh's work Eastern and Western Morality and Ethics (Đạo đức và luân lý Đông Tây), thereby identifying the core content of Phan Chau Trinh's idea of morality.

Comparative method: Comparing Phan Chau Trinh's perspectives on moral education with those of Martha C. Nussbaum to develop directions for improving the efficiency of moral education for the young generations in modern society.

Empirical research method: Analyzing and synthesizing practical data and experiences to examine the current moral status among Vietnamese young generations. The article uses survey results, educational reports, and media coverage to clarify the present context of moral education, thereby providing a basis for orientations in real-life conditions and increasing their practical relevance.

### 4. Results and discussion

In order to demonstrate the systematic nature and the connection between Phan Chau Trinh's ethical thought in the modern context and its practical application in educating the young generation, the structure of the results and discussion section is organized into four approaches: (1) Phan Chau Trinh - the representative patriot in Vietnam at the beginning of the 20th century; (2) The core content of Phan Chau Trinh's ideology on ethics and moral education for the young generations; (3) Challenges in moral education for Vietnam younger



generations nowadays; and (4) Inheritance and utilization of Phan Chau Trinh's ideology in moral education for the current young generations in Vietnam.

This structure consistently highlights the relationship between theoretical foundations and practical demands, while ensuring coherence in elucidating Phan Chau Trinh's thought in relation to current issues facing the youth. As a result, the findings and discussion section is clearly oriented and aligned with the research questions of the article.

#### **4.1. Phan Chau Trinh - the representative patriot in Vietnam at the beginning of the 20th century**

Phan Chau Trinh was a representative historical figure in Vietnam in the 20th century. He was one of the leaders who initiated the Duy Tân movement that stood out with the idea of comprehensive Vietnam social reform from culture - education - politics. The main characteristic of his reform policy is not to use revolutionary violence but to focus on intelligence awakening, promoting culture, and reforming education in a modern way. Reviewing Phan Chau Trinh's political life, it can be summarized through a few key points as follows:

Firstly, Phan Chau Trinh advocated saving the country with peaceful reform, which is different from the ideology of Phan Boi Chau, a politician at the same time, with the policy of violent revolution and reliance on foreign assistance.

Secondly, Phan Chau Trinh actively promoted and established reform organizations. He and his patriotic scholars, such as Huynh Thuc Khang and Tran Quy Cap, established commercial associations and modern-style schools in several provinces of Central Vietnam. The difference between these schools is their departure from the way of studying and taking the exam according to the traditional Confucianism system. Instead, they focus on learning the Romanized Vietnamese (Quốc ngữ), encouraging scientific thinking, and fostering ethics. All to increase the practicality, modernity, and applicability of contemporary education.

Thirdly, Phan Chau Trinh took the initiative to call for the reform of the feudal court, asking the French colonialists to promote enlightenment instead of suppressing the Viet. This was reflected in his support for the Constitution, press freedom, and cooperating with the French colonialists with a spirit of democracy and self-reliance.

Finally, Phan Chau Trinh strongly spread reformist ideas both domestically and abroad. The foundation of his reformist viewpoint stemmed from his adoption of the ideologies of Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Voltaire, etc. who advocated human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. In Japan, France, and Vietnam, he actively gave speeches and wrote articles, both to propagate new ideas and to awaken the national pride of the young intellectuals, thereby promoting social reform. Some of his notable articles include Letter to the French Government (Đầu Phá Chính phủ thư) and The song to awaken the soul of the nation (Tỉnh Quốc Hồn Ca) written in Japan; Indochina Politics (Đông Dương Chính trị luận) and Franc-Vietnam alliance and the New Vietnam (Pháp Việt liên hiệp hậu chi tân Việt



Nam) written in France; and Eastern and Western Morality and Ethics (Đạo đức luân lý Đông Tây) and Democracy and Monarchy (Quân trị chủ nghĩa và Dân trị chủ nghĩa) written in Vietnam. Among these, Eastern and Western Morality and Ethics directly discuss and analyze moral issues aimed at educating the young generation in Vietnam.

Phan Chau Trinh's political life demonstrates that he was a sharp-minded and open-thinking individual who supported liberal education and strongly advocated freedom, democracy, and civil rights. His reformist ideology was built on a Confucian foundation – a mix of the traditional Eastern values with Western enlightenment ideology. It was this fusion between Confucianism and democratic ideals that made his theoretical framework both traditional and modern, forming a distinctive ideological system of the time.

#### **4.2. The core content of Phan Chau Trinh's ideology on ethics and moral education for the young generations**

Phan Chau Trinh's ideas on ethics and ethical education for the young generations are clearly expressed in his work Eastern and Western Morality and Ethics. This was a speech he gave to young people in 1925, later compiled into books and other works and republished several times in Vietnam. The characteristic of the work is to highlight the urgency of changing moral perceptions for the young generations. Phan Chau Trinh emphasized that young people need to take the initiative in acquiring new ideas from abroad, eliminating outdated notions to promote Vietnamese culture.

In this work, he provides his insights on personal ethics and social ethics, expresses a critical stance towards outdated traditions, and demonstrates a willingness to embrace the moral values of humanity. In particular, the work presents the following moral perspectives:

Firstly, it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the two concepts of morality (đạo đức) and ethics (luân lý). Phan Chau Trinh says that while closely related, these terms differ in their conceptual scope, in which ethics are part of morality (Phan, Phan, Nguyen and Tan, 2024). Morality is the norm that requires people of any age, of any race, to adhere to and be constant over time. In contrast, ethics is subject to change across historical periods. What is considered ethics in one society or nation may differ significantly in another. The author also distinguishes levels of ethics, including: familial ethics, national ethics, and social ethics. From this point, we found that Phan Chau Trinh interpreted the word "ethics" (luân lý) closer to the meaning of "customs", "culture". However, his contribution is to separate personal ethics from social ethics, which is to establish the relationship between tradition and modernity, between stability and transformation.

Secondly, Phan Chau Trinh criticizes the obsolescence of Eastern feudal morality. The Eastern feudal morality, according to the author, is becoming increasingly undermined by the power of despotic monarchy, which shaped the entire environment in which moral education was conducted. Vietnamese people are born into an authoritarian family and live in an autocratic country, a mindset



of submission, slave mentality, without political opinions, and a lack of creativity inevitably takes root. It is this that distorts the spirit of orthodox Confucianism. To prove this point, the author cited several examples, such as: "Our national ethics, from past to present, has existed solely within the limited bond between king and subject", "the people only know the virtue of loyalty to the monarch, but not the love of country" (Phan, Phan, Nguyen and Tan, 2024). Phan Chau Trinh calls this Decayed Confucianism (Hủ Nho). Without timely awareness, learning, and changing moral perceptions, Vietnam society will not be able to develop.

Thirdly, he highly appreciates the ethics and morality of modern Western. Phan Chau Trinh does not absolutize the virtues of Western social morality, meaning not to advocate blind trust and follow, but to emphasize the necessity of learning from the civilized and progressive aspects of humanity. The Western morality, whose core is liberal ideology, which was formed and widely disseminated from the Greek-Roman civilization, was later inherited and supported by notable figures such as Rousseau, La Fontaine, Montesquieu, Pascal, Voltaire... Phan Chau Trinh believed that these individuals "unlocked the chains of despotism to lead the people to freedom" (Phan, Phan, Nguyen and Tan, 2024). This is the key point opposite to Eastern morality, one side advocating freedom, one advocating authoritarianism. The author supports democratic ideology, stating in his work: "Democracy is a very miraculous medicine for curing our country's disease of authoritarianism" (Phan, Phan, Nguyen and Tan, 2024). Ultimately, if individuals are not enlightened, the entire nation will remain enslaved.

Finally, building personal morals is associated with civic responsibility. "Morality collapses first, and only then the nation falls" (Phan, Phan, Nguyen and Tan, 2024). To save the country first, it is necessary to save its moral foundation, for moral reform is the root that leads to national promotion. Each individual should be aware of the backwardness of traditional morality, thereby adjusting to the transformations of the times, especially as the cultural relations of the East and the West are becoming increasingly defined.

Moreover, progressive, liberal, and equal ideas should be absorbed to promote national education and culture. Phan Chau Trinh asserts that "it is necessary to bring true civilization in Europe and the West in harmony with true Confucianism in the East" (Phan, Phan, Nguyen and Tan, 2024). According to the author, a clear and profound understanding of national reform is vital, because each citizen borns in a country with thousands of years of founding and defending, has the right to be proud of their heritage, the right to freedom, and the right to enjoy the legitimate benefits of the land that their ancestors built and protected.

Phan Chau Trinh's moral ideology can be summed up as: the emphasis on civic responsibility for national reform, the spirit of autonomy and independent thinking, from which it aims for moral reform for a liberal education. From these perspectives, moral education should aim to train people to take morality as the root in the development process, to inherit, to promote the traditions of national



morality and to absorb the values of human morality. Moral cultivation is to liberate human spirit, to empower people to national development with freedom, creativity, and a break from outdated feudal morality.

When compared to that of Martha C. Nussbaum, Phan Chau Trinh's perspective bears several notable similarities:

Firstly, moral education is the root that shapes the sense of civic responsibility. In Eastern and Western Morality and Ethics, Phan Chau Trinh emphasizes awakening to understand the pain of the oppressed people. Accordingly, patriots need a new understanding of "patriotism", "civil rights", and "duty" (Phan, Phan, Nguyen and Tan, 2024). Changing awareness and choosing the right path is the responsibility of a patriotic citizen. Similarly, Nussbaum argues that a good citizen in modern society not only obeys rules but also must be able to think critically about justice, liberty and equality (Nussbaum, 2010). The sense of responsibility here is interpreted as the individual's perception of social issues, thereby accurately defining his role. Moral education should equip citizens with a sense of responsibility.

Secondly, moral education should be free from outdated stereotypes. Just as science, as a whole, requires revolutions to dismantle old paradigms and replace them with new stereotypes in an ever-improving direction (Thomas, 2008), education also needs to be directed towards this spirit. Phan Chau Trinh strongly criticizes the traditional way of learning that only focuses on books without applying knowledge to practice, parting away from a modern academic background, which leads to the inability to perceive and analyze social problems. For Nussbaum, she calls for the development of critical thinking for learners. This is the foundation of liberal arts education because it is associated with critical competence, scientific skepticism and debate (Nussbaum, 1997).

Thirdly, moral education should be oriented toward the spirit of democracy. While Phan Chau Trinh cites the consequences of feudalism as despotism from family to nation, Nussbaum warns of the danger that education commercialization would turn people into machines serving economic goals (Nussbaum, 2010). Whereas the mission of education, especially moral education, is to cultivate well-rounded people in terms of virtue, intellect, physics, and aesthetics, aiming towards the qualities of global citizens.

Both Phan Chau Trinh and Martha C. Nussbaum's ideologies support reform in moral education, opposite to education serving for ruling class's interests, and advocate for comprehensive citizen training under the basic premise of a liberation spirit and critical thinking. However, different historical and social backgrounds lead to differences in the views of these two characters. If Phan Chau Trinh, in the context of colonial society, takes national awakening and the way to national salvation first, Nussbaum, with modern democracy, takes well-rounded human training as the core goal, aiming to train global citizens. In addition, Nussbaum emphasizes the role of literature and art in moral education, while this is not clearly featured in Phan Chau Trinh's works.



#### **4.3. Challenges in moral education for Vietnam younger generations nowadays**

In Vietnam, the youth sector is at 22 million people, accounting for nearly 21% percent of the country's population (Ho, 2023). This is the main force, playing an important role in the country's construction and reform process. According to the research results of the Institute of Youth Studies, most young Vietnamese have a strong political stance and have confidence in the leadership of the Party. 82.7% of young people expressed their desire to contribute to the country. About 60 to 70% of them aspired to join the Party (Hong, 2023), indicating the enduring presence of noble ideals within the journey of living, learning, and working among the young generations.

However, the context of globalization with the development of the market economy in Vietnam has created considerable challenges in moral education. A range of manifestations of moral degradation among young people today can be observed, including social apathy, personality/responsibility crisis, lack of moral direction, and excessive democracy through deviant behavior. These issues are profoundly serious and can lead to lasting consequences on the politics, culture and education of the whole nation. In recent years, there has been growing concern over the young's increasingly careless lifestyles and their diminishing sense of responsibility toward themselves, their families, and society. Incidents of domestic violence and school violence are on the rise, accompanied by a serious erosion of traditional family moral values.

According to the statistics of the Supreme People's Court, about 70-80% of approximately 220000 annual divorces come from domestic violence. An average of one in three women suffers from physical or sexual violence by their husbands, and above 90% of them do not seek outside help (Vietnam Women's Union, 2022); an average of 300,000 abortions occur between the ages of 15 and 19 (Family Department, 2021). Notably, in just over two years (01/09/2021 - 05/11/2023), there were 699 school violence cases involving 2016 students, 854 of whom were female students, 53% of cases that occurred right at school (Thy, 2023). The Google search received nearly 27 million results in just 0.31 seconds of this problem (Phuong, 2024).

Besides, young people are becoming more immersed in cyberspace. On average, they use social networks 7 hours/day (Internal Political Security Department, 2024), but mainly for entertainment purposes. A survey by the Youth Research Institute revealed that young people tend to use their spare time to surf social networks such as TikTok, Facebook, Zalo, Instagram... rather than physical training or helping their parents with housework. Additionally, education that focuses too much on grades and achievements leaves significant consequences on students. Research shows that stress caused by students' academic pressure accounts for 61.9%, and depression rate of over 50% also comes from school-related causes (Ngoc, 2022). Schools and families seem to maintain the traditional concept of judging through academic performance, considering it an irreplaceable measure. In addition, the apathy of young people, unqualified remarks, selfish lifestyles, and the value of formalities have been



discussed a lot in the media. This shows the spiritual impoverishment of a part of the young in Vietnam, and highlights their limited capacity to build meaningful values in life

All of these statistics once again confirm that moral education faces tremendous challenges. Families and schools have yet to effectively promote moral education, and the values of personal and familial ethics are in decline. Many families tend to overemphasize rote knowledge while neglecting survival skills and integration abilities. Young people still prefer a selfish and irresponsible lifestyle.

Compared to the educational perspective of Phan Chau Trinh and Martha C. Nussbaum, moral education should aim to train people comprehensively, with the foundation of basic ethical qualities such as: patriotism, responsibility, creativity, empathy and building global citizenship qualities like critical thinking, liberating spirit... These figures show that moral education needs to be considered thoroughly, because after all, in any era, the nation's interests and future are always on the shoulders of the young.

#### **4.4. Inheritance and utilization of Phan Chau Trinh's ideology in moral education for the current young generations in Vietnam**

Although Phan Chau Trinh's idea of national liberation possesses many progressive points, there are also certain limitations. Not only Phan Chau Trinh, but also scholars in Vietnam in the early 20th century who followed the path of democracy in general were not fully aware of the nature of capitalist democracy (Truong & Trinh, 2005); therefore, they sometimes overpraised French democracy. Phan Chau Trinh advocated relying on France to build democracy in Vietnam, opposing revolutionary violence. This is an incomplete revolution, as President Ho Chi Minh later commented that this method is the same as we are "asking the enemy for mercy". However, Phan Chau Trinh's idea of morality brings many new values and is full of humanity. The criticism of traditional Confucianism, the promotion of democratic education, and civil rights based on morality are a projection of liberalism in the new era.

The current moral condition of the young can be seen as a consequence of a test-oriented education that lacks investment in fostering critical thinking, empathy, and civic responsibility. Phan Chau Trinh already pointed this out, even though he lived more than a century ago. Inheriting the highlights of Phan Chau Trinh's moral ideology, we propose several directions to improve the efficiency of moral education for today's young generation in Vietnam:

First, moral education should evoke critical thinking in learners by empowering learners to reflect on and evaluate moral situations and behaviors rather than teaching mechanical theory.

Second, it is necessary to integrate subjects on global citizenship and human rights into the moral education curriculum from the secondary school level so that students can locate their responsibilities towards themselves, their families, and society in the context of globalization and cross-culture.



Third, a democratic and dialogic learning environment should be built so that learners feel respected and heard, thereby being more open in terms of emotion and thinking.

Fourth, moral education should be linked with life practice, avoiding mechanical theory. We need more materials drawn from daily life, the country, and humanity to ensure that morality is associated with actions, not just formality.

Fifth, it is necessary to train a team of teachers who are knowledgeable about modern ethical education theory and capable of inspiring students through practical moral lessons. In addition, the coordination between schools and families is important, because family is the most direct and sustainable educational environment for learners.

The application of these proposals to Vietnam's current context requires a long-term process of effort and synchronized coordination from stakeholders such as families, schools and society. The goal is to both inherit the nation's traditional moral values and continually absorb new moral values from humanity.

## 5. Conclusion

Phan Chau Trinh's idea of morality is a valuable legacy of the Vietnamese people. With this ideology, Phan Chau Trinh has laid the foundation for a new and progressive moral education model. Facing the current social situation, where the morality of young people is showing signs of crisis, Phan Chau Trinh's ideology is more urgent and practically relevant. The article analyzes Phan Chau Trinh's ideology on ethics based on Martha C Nussbaum's theory.

Research shows that, while Martha C. Nussbaum proposes moral education in a way that combines rationality and emotion, placing concern on social issues, Phan Chau Trinh, from the beginning of the 20th century, emphasizes that national destiny could only change when education is oriented toward personality training, democratic spirit, self-consciousness regarding people's rights and responsibilities. Based on Phan Chau Trinh's broader picture of national liberation ideology, this article directly analyzes his work on moral perspectives and moral education, thereby identifying core values that can be applied as valuable lessons for Vietnam today.

We have given some proposals to ensure that moral education for the young generations becomes pragmatic in the spirit of democracy. In which moral education should be accompanied by social responsibility, education methods should strengthen practicality, and educational ideology should be oriented towards freedom and creativity.

Although this is a qualitative study, we believe that further quantitative surveys should be systematically combined to make the study more complete. This article could open up new ideas, such as examining the moral perspectives of Vietnamese scholars after Phan Chau Trinh, building models of global moral qualities for the young generations of Vietnam, or improving moral teaching



activities at all levels of education to contribute to the goal of training Vietnamese to develop comprehensively in the context of globalization.

## REFERENCES

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AFFAIRS. **Degradation of moral lifestyle, causes and current situation**, 2021. Available in: <https://giadinh.bvhttdl.gov.vn/suy-thoai-ve-dao-duc-loi-song-nguyen-nhan-va-thuc-trang/> Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

HHTT. **Conference "Renovation thought of patriot Phan Chau Trinh"**, 2022. Available in: <https://quangnam.gov.vn/hoi-thao-khoa-hoc-tu-tuong-canhan-tan-cua-nha-yeu-nuoc-phan-chau-trinh-23689.html>. Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

HO, Huong. **Promoting the strengths of young people, changing the growth model towards a prosperous life for the next generation**. Available in: <https://quochoi.vn/pages/tim-kiem.aspx?ItemID=79893>. Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

HONG, Minh. **Ethical and lifestyle education for young people: Who is responsible?** Available in: <https://baophapluat.vn/giao-duc-dao-duc-loi-song-cho-thanh-thieu-nien-trach-nhiem-thuoc-ve-ai-post487453.html>. Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

HONG, Minh. **Ethical and lifestyle education for young people: Who is responsible?** Available in: <https://baophapluat.vn/giao-duc-dao-duc-loi-song-cho-thanh-thieu-nien-trach-nhiem-thuoc-ve-ai-post487453.html>. Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

INTERNAL POLITICAL SECURITY DIVISION. **Culture of using social networks among young people**. Available in: <https://congan.laichau.gov.vn/index.php/chong-dien-bien-hoa-binh-22/van-hoa-su-dung-mang-xa-hoi-cua-mot-bo-phan-gioi-tre-2072.html>. Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

LONG, Cao Xuan. Phan Chau Trinh's thoughts on education. **Social Science Journal**, 3, n.211, p. 1-8, 2015.

LONG, Cao Xuan. Similarities in the thoughts on education of Phan Chau Trinh and Fukuzawa Yukichi. **European Journal of Social Sciences Studies**, 4, n.6, p.171-181, 2020.

LIU, Ke. On The Reason of Martha C. Nussbaum' s Moral Education. **倫理研究**, 1, n.98, p. 83-97, 2014.



MAI, Uoc Tran. Find out of the point of democracy of Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chau Trinh. **Lex Humana** (ISSN 2175-0947), 15, n.4, p.110–129, 2023.

MAI, Uoc Tran. **From Phan Chau Trinh's thought of "opening up people's knowledge" to think about educational innovation in our country today.** Available in:

<https://vjol.info.vn/index.php/sphcm/article/view/12125/11035>. Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

NGOC, Long. **Over 60% of students from the survey said that studying leads to depression.** Available in: <https://thanhnien.vn/tren-60-hoc-sinh-tu-khao-sat-cho-rang-hoc-tap-de-dan-den-tram-cam-nhat-1851518717.htm>. Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

NGUYEN, Van Khanh. Phan Chau Trinh - the outstanding Vietnamese reformer early XX century. **The Russian Journal of Vietnamese Studies**, 6, n.2, p.46–57, 2022.

NUSSBAUM, Martha. **Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education.** [s.l.] Harvard University Press, 1997.

NUSSBAUM, Martha. **Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities.** [s.l.] Princeton University Press, 2010.

PHAN, Chau Trinh; PHAN, Van Truong; NGUYEN, An Ninh; TAN, Nam Tu. **East and West ethics and morality.** Ho Chi Minh: General Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 2024.

PHUONG, Thao. **The pain of school violence is increasingly "rejuvenating".** Available in: <https://dansinh.dantri.com.vn/vi-tre-em/nhuc-nhoi-bao-luc-hoc-duong-ngay-cang-tre-hoa-20240413151856210.htm>. Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

THI TRINH, Thach. Main factors influencing the formation of Phan Chau Trinh's reformist thoughts | **Isagoge - Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences.** Isagoge, n.5, p.239–268, 2025.

THOMAS, Kuhn. **Structure of scientific revolutions.** Ha Noi: Tri Thuc Publishing House, 2008.

THY, Uyen. **The rate of students involved in domestic violence is very large.** Available in: <https://nhandan.vn/ty-le-hoc-sinh-lien-quan-den-bao-luc-gia-dinh-la-rat-lon-post781476.html>. Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

TRAN, Minh Hieu. The liberal education ideology of Wilhelm Von Humboldt and Phan Chau Trinh: Analysis, comparison, and commentary. **Journal of Education**, p. 14–18, 2021.



TRUONG, Van Chung; TRINH, Doan Chinh. **The transformation of Vietnamese thought in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.** Ha Noi: The Truth National Political Publishing House, 2005.

VIETNAM WOMEN'S UNION. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: **Heartbreaking numbers.** Available in: <https://hoilhpn.org.vn/tin-chi-tiet/-/chi-tiet/bao-luc-gia-%C4%91inh-nhung-con-so-%C4%91au-long-47791-4504.html>. Access in: 18 jul. 2025.

VINH, Sinh. **Phan Chau Trinh and Political Works.** Ho Chi Minh: Youth Publishing House, 2018.

Received: September, 10, 2025.

Accepted: November 25, 2025.

Published: January 05, 2026.

