

# The Influence of Traditional Chinese Culture on Educational Philosophy and Practice



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**Abstract:** In the context of globalization and technologization, modern Chinese education is facing rapid changes and challenges. Through an in-depth discussion of the influence of Chinese traditional culture, especially Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism, on educational philosophy and practice, this paper analyzes the changes in teaching methods, teaching content, and educational evaluation, reveals the use of traditional culture in modern educational practice, and considers how to draw on and apply the wisdom of traditional culture in the current educational challenges.

**Keywords:** Confucian education; Taoist education; Legal education; modern educational philosophy

## Introduction

Education, as an engine of social progress, has been constantly evolving and reforming. However, no matter how education changes, its fundamental goal is always to cultivate talents and serve society. With a civilizational history of five thousand years, the influence of China's profound cultural heritage and educational traditions on our education cannot be ignored. The educational ideas of Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism have influenced the thinking and behavior of the nation for thousands of years. Nowadays, when facing the challenges and transformation of education brought by globalization and Informatisation, it is both a return and an innovation to explore how traditional culture can play a role in modern education.

## 1. Educational concepts in traditional Chinese culture

### 1.1 The influence of Confucianism on education

Confucianism is one of the most profound philosophical systems in China's traditional culture that has influenced education. Its main influence on

education philosophy can be summarized in two aspects: first, it attaches importance to the moral cultivation and personality cultivation of individuals, and second, it advocates the value of respecting teachers and teaching. Specifically, the Confucian philosophy of education emphasizes the morality of human beings, and its basic principle is "benevolence," including love for others, generosity, respect, and faithfulness. In educational practice, Confucianism considers learning and education not only as a process of acquiring knowledge but also as a process of cultivating moral character and improving personality. The goal of Confucian education is to make the individual a "gentleman", with moral nobility and responsible behavior. This educational philosophy, which emphasizes the cultivation of character, makes education in China not only the transmission of knowledge but also the leading of morality and the shaping of character (Gai, 2006). Second, Confucianism emphasizes respect for teachers and regards them as important players in society and education as the cornerstone of the state and society. To Confucians, teachers are not only the transmitters of knowledge, but also the guides of morality and the models of society. They believe that a good teacher can lead students to moral light and

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social success. Therefore, under the influence of Confucianism, our society has long held teachers and education in high esteem, making education a constant focus of social attention. Through these two aspects, the profound influence of Confucianism on education in China can be seen. Not only has it guided moral cultivation and personality training, but it has also provided a solid social foundation for our education system in terms of respect for teachers and education.

### 1.2 The Influence of Taoist Thought on Education

Taoist thought, which originated in ancient China, is an important part of our traditional culture and has had a profound influence on our educational philosophy and practice. The influence of Taoism on education is mainly reflected in the respect and guidance for the natural development of individuals (Li, 1997). Specifically, Taoist thought advocates "going with nature", and in educational practice, this thought advocates that educators should respect students' differences, recognize that each student has his or her own unique learning style and development path, and create conditions for students to learn in their way and rhythm as much as possible, which has a profound influence on personalized education and differentiated teaching. This has a profound impact on personalized education and differentiated teaching. Secondly, Taoism's idea of "rule by doing nothing" also provides important inspiration for education. It advocates harmony through self-adjustment and self-improvement, rather than coercion or intervention. In educational practice, this is reflected in the emphasis on students' self-directed learning, encouraging self-discovery and self-innovation, and making students the subjects of learning rather than passive receivers. This educational philosophy helps cultivate students' autonomy, innovation, and critical thinking.

### 1.3 The Influence of Legalism on Education

Legalism is one of the major philosophical schools in ancient China, and its influence on educational philosophy and practice is mainly reflected in the emphasis on rules and institutions and the reverence for authority. Specifically, Legalists

emphasized the importance of laws and rules. They advocate that law should be the mainstay in the maintenance of social order and that the state should be ruled by institutions. In terms of educational philosophy, this idea is expressed in the respect and maintenance of educational rules and regulations and advocates the regulation of educational activities through clear educational rules and regulations to ensure justice and fairness in education. This philosophy of education, which emphasizes institutionalism and normality, has had a profound impact on safeguarding the quality of education and regulating educational behavior. Second, legalists advocate authority; they emphasize the divine right of kings and advocate that people should fear and obey authority. In education, this idea is reflected in the respect for the authority of teachers and the claim that students should obey the teaching and management of teachers. This educational philosophy of respecting authority ensures the order and efficiency of education to a certain extent, but it may also trigger restrictions on the development of student's independent thinking and critical thinking skills (Wang & Qu & Jiang, 2004).

## 2. The influence of traditional Chinese culture on educational practice

### 2.1 The choice of teaching methods

The choice of teaching methods is a key aspect of educational practice, which directly affects the learning effect of students and the realization of educational goals. Under the influence of China's traditional culture, teaching methods mainly include enlightenment, guidance, and teaching and education. Among them, enlightenment is the foundation of our traditional teaching methods. This method requires teachers to impart knowledge in an easy-to-understand manner so that students can go from unawareness to understanding and from non-mastery to mastery. This method of initiation is designed to stimulate students' interest in learning and help them build their initial knowledge and understanding of knowledge. Second, guidance is another important teaching method. In our traditional

culture, teachers are not only the transmitters of knowledge, but also the guides of students' ideas. Teachers need to provide appropriate guidance and suggestions to lead students to a deeper exploration and understanding of knowledge according to their learning process and characteristics. This teaching method focuses on developing students' active learning ability and critical thinking. Finally, teaching and educating people is the core concept of traditional education in China. Teachers should not only teach knowledge, but also focus on the overall development of students, including moral, emotional, and social aspects. Teachers cultivate students' comprehensive ability and social responsibility through various teaching activities, such as classroom discussions, practical activities and teamwork (Fu, 2006). In general, the choice of teaching methods needs to take full account of students' learning needs and characteristics, as well as the achievement of educational goals. Under the influence of our traditional culture, enlightenment, guidance, and teaching have become the main forms of teaching methods. In modern education, experience and inspiration can be drawn from these traditional teaching methods to better achieve educational goals.

## **2.2 Arrangement of teaching contents**

In China's educational practice, the arrangement of teaching contents has been influenced by the profound influence of our traditional culture. This is mainly reflected in the emphasis on classical education and the equal emphasis on moral and intellectual education. Education in China has always attached great importance to classical education. In ancient times, Confucian classics, including the Book of Songs, the Book of Shang, the Book of Rites, the Book of Changes, the Spring and Autumn Annals, as well as the Analects and Mencius, were a major part of the teaching content. These classics are not only the basis for learning a language, history, philosophy, and other subjects, but also an important channel for learning and passing on our traditional culture, values, and moral codes. In modern times, although the teaching contents have become more diversified and

modernized, classical education still occupies an important position in language teaching and cultural education. Secondly, the arrangement of teaching content in China tends to emphasize both moral and intellectual education. In our traditional culture, the education of morality is regarded as the primary task of education. Therefore, in the arrangement of teaching content, moral education is parallel to knowledge education and skill training, forming the educational concept of "moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor". This philosophy is not only reflected in the specific teaching content and curriculum but also the educational evaluation and student assessment system. In short, China's traditional culture has had a profound influence on the arrangement of teaching content and has formed a unique educational model and philosophy. In modern education, these traditional concepts and practices still have important reference and reference significance.

## **2.3 Development of educational evaluation**

Educational evaluation is an important part of the educational process, and its main goal is to assess students' learning achievements and processes to understand their learning progress, identify their learning problems, and give suggestions for improvement. Under the influence of our traditional culture, educational assessment is usually formulated with an emphasis on the depth of knowledge understanding, the degree of skill mastery, and the performance of moral qualities. Specifically, knowledge understanding and skill mastery are important components of educational assessment. Teachers need to assess students' knowledge mastery to understand the depth of their understanding of the content they are learning. At the same time, teachers also need to focus on students' skill mastery to see if they can apply what they have learned to solve practical problems. Secondly, moral character is also an important part of our traditional education evaluation. In our traditional culture, students' character development and moral cultivation are valued, so students' moral performance is also included in the educational evaluation. Teachers need

to pay attention to students' moral behavior and evaluate their moral performance. These concepts are reflected in the actual educational evaluation (Wang, 2013). For example, in one secondary school, the school developed an educational evaluation system that included not only students' academic performance and skill acquisition but also paid special attention to students' moral performance. The school set up a moral evaluation system that includes aspects such as honesty and trustworthiness, respect for others, teamwork, and social responsibility, and regularly evaluates students, and uses the results of the moral evaluation as a reference for important decisions such as promotion to higher education and scholarship applications. This example shows that the influence of China's traditional culture on educational evaluation has been reflected and carried forward in modern educational practice.

### **3. Traditional Cultural Influences in Modern Chinese Education**

#### **3.1 The transformation of modern educational philosophy**

Over the past few decades, modern educational philosophy has undergone a profound transformation. This transformation is mainly reflected in the following aspects: student-centered teaching, the concept of lifelong learning, and the trend of multiple assessments. First, while education in the past was mostly teacher-centered and students were passive recipients of knowledge, the modern educational philosophy emphasizes student-centeredness and values students' initiative, creativity, and independence. The role of teachers has changed from being the transmitter of knowledge to being the guide and supporter of students' learning. Teaching methods pay more attention to heuristic teaching and encourage students to explore independently, think creatively, and develop their comprehensive ability and problem-solving ability. Second, modern education philosophy emphasizes lifelong learning. In the context of the knowledge economy, the speed of knowledge updating is getting faster and faster, and lifelong learning has become a necessity for

everyone. The goal of education is not only to let students master certain knowledge and skills but also to cultivate their learning ability so that they can continue learning and adapt to social changes in the future. Finally, modern education philosophy advocates multiple assessments. In the past, educational evaluation relied mainly on test scores, which often ignored students' differences and non-intellectual factors. Modern education philosophy emphasizes comprehensive and multi-faceted evaluation of students, including not only academic performance but also learning attitude, innovation ability, teamwork ability, social responsibility, etc (Qin, 2018).

#### **3.2 The Use of traditional culture in modern educational practice**

Although the development of modern educational philosophy has brought many new ideas and methods to educational practice, China's traditional culture still plays an important role in modern educational practice, providing rich educational resources and educational concepts. First, traditional culture is valued and used in modern education as part of the educational content. Classical education in China remains an important part of modern education, and traditional cultural contents such as Confucian classics and historical stories are integrated into language education, history education, and moral education as an important means of passing on traditional culture and spreading social values. Secondly, educational concepts and methods from traditional culture have also been applied in modern educational practice. For example, the educational concepts of Confucianism, such as "teaching according to one's ability" and "teaching without permanent teachers", have been interpreted and practiced in modern education. In addition, the teaching methods of enlightenment, guidance, and education have also been borrowed and applied by modern educators, aiming to cultivate independent thinking skills and overall quality in students (Shao, 2015).

#### **3.3 Challenges Facing Modern Chinese Education and the Role of Traditional Culture**

Modern Chinese education faces multiple challenges, such as coping with the rapidly changing socio-economic environment, balancing the contradiction between standardized testing and comprehensive quality education, and relieving students' excessive academic pressure. In this process, our traditional culture can play an important role. The traditional culture's educational philosophy of "harmony is precious" and "teaching according to ability" aims to focus on individual differences, reduce the pressure of competition, and bring more humane guidelines to modern education. At the same time, Confucianism's emphasis on moral education has positive implications for solving the problems of individualism and the dilution of moral values in modern society. The wisdom of traditional culture can provide both lessons for the development of modern educational philosophy and useful reflections and strategies for addressing the challenges facing modern education (Si & Zhang, 2012).

#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

#### Acknowledgement

This research was funded by :

1. Luzhou Key Research Base of Philosophy and Social Sciences · Luzhou Ideological and Political Education Research Center Project: Research on the path of Integrating the family style of Luzhou Fu Excellent Tutor into the Ideological and political education of medical students from the perspective of Luzhou City (Project Number: LSXZZ202322);
2. Luzhou Key Research Base of Philosophy and Social Sciences · Luzhou Cultural Construction Research Center Project: Research on the integration path of Luzhou Fu Family Style Culture and Rural Spiritual Civilization Construction (Project number: WH202310)

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**How to Cite:** Chen, L., & Yang, R. (2023). The Influence of Traditional Chinese Culture on Educational Philosophy and Practice. *Contemporary Education and Teaching Research*, 04(07), 322-326. <https://doi.org/10.61360/BoniCETR232013010707>