



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation.

Confucius's Educational Ideas

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 05

Issue: 03

May-June 2024

Received: 06-04-2024

Accepted: 10-05-2024

Page No: 907-911

Abstract

Throughout history, scholars have consistently underscored the pivotal role of education in both personal development and societal advancement. Confucius was a renowned philosopher, statesman, and educator in ancient China, living from 551 to 479 BC. Hailing from the Lu region, where the cultural legacies of the Zhou Dynasty thrived, Confucius descended from ancestors who migrated from the Song state. His profound influence transcended borders, as he laid the groundwork for educational principles not only in China but also globally. Confucius spearheaded a groundbreaking movement by widely promoting education among the masses, establishing a robust framework of teaching methodologies, and advocating for an ideal social model. His educational philosophy remains a cornerstone of human educational theory, enriching both the broader discourse on education and the historical narrative of ancient Chinese pedagogy.

Keywords: Confucius; educational thought; content; values.

Introduction

For a country aiming for development, prioritizing education is essential, as it is the cornerstone for cultivating a new intellectual framework. In the era of the fourth industrial revolution, knowledge has become the most prized asset for individuals and society. Consequently, intellectual property now stands as the most crucial form of wealth, receiving recognition and protection from nations worldwide. The resources driving socio-economic advancement have evolved; where once natural resources and physical labor were paramount, today, the intellectual prowess of human resources forms the bedrock of progress. "China is one of the ancient centers of culture, science, and philosophy, with the richest and most brilliant achievements not only of Eastern civilization but of all mankind. In particular, philosophical thought has an important meaning in ancient Chinese culture" (Xing, 2005) ^[6]. The brilliant development of ancient Chinese philosophy was also the time when Chinese society entered the Spring and Autumn period. It was a period of profound transformation from the socio-economic form of slavery to the feudal socio-economic form, the ideological and moral values of the old society were corrupted, but the new ideas and ethics are still on the way of establishment. It was in that special historical condition that created the premise for the birth of a series of philosophical systems with great philosophers whose names were associated with Chinese and human history. In there, Confucius highly emphasized the role of education in improving people and improving society. It can be asserted that Confucius was the one who laid the first foundation for progressive educational views when he introduced the policy of "illiterate people are of no social class" (Analects of Confucius) (Con, 2000) ^[1]. Although in Confucius' educational thought, there are still many historical limitations on social class, if we know how to "cleanse out the drawbacks", discard limitations, and inherit values, the historical values of Confucius' educational thought are still relevant today. The article focuses on clarifying the content of Confucius's educational ideology and its value in the current era.

Methods

This article aims to explore the educational philosophy of Confucius and assess its relevance in the modern era. The research delves into the core principles of Confucian thought on education and evaluates their enduring significance today.

Theoretical research methods form the backbone of this study, encompassing the examination of existing literature and employing logical reasoning to derive essential scientific insights.

To achieve a comprehensive understanding, various analytical and synthetic techniques are employed. Document analysis is used to dissect different sources and theoretical perspectives, allowing for a thorough examination of the subject matter. The synthesis method integrates these analyzed components, weaving them together into a cohesive and profound theoretical framework. This approach enables the creation of a nuanced system that highlights the various dimensions of Confucian educational thought.

Additionally, classification and systematization methods are applied to organize scientific documents. This involves categorizing information based on common characteristics, ensuring a structured and clear presentation of concepts that align with specific themes or developmental trends. Through these methodological approaches, the article aspires to construct a detailed and insightful theoretical system centered on Confucian education and its contemporary value.

Results and Discussions

During the spring and autumn and Warring States periods, China was engulfed in widespread chaos marked by relentless power struggles, a decline in social morals, and widespread suffering. Amid this turmoil, numerous philosophies emerged, each proposing different solutions to restore social order. The Mohists advocated for universal benevolence, the Legalists emphasized strict adherence to the rule of law, and Confucianism championed the cultivation of virtue. Confucian education, in particular, was fundamentally focused on the development of human morality. A quintessential figure of this school of thought was Confucius, who believed that ethical governance and virtuous conduct were central to societal stability. As highlighted by Romar (2004)^[5], Confucius considered power to be a pivotal ethical concern in human relationships. His teachings emphasized that true authority should be exercised with moral integrity and that the cultivation of personal virtue was essential for both individual fulfillment and the harmonious functioning of society.

Confucius, often revered as the "founder of the Confucian school," held a profound commitment to lifelong learning and teaching, encapsulated in his motto: "Study without getting bored, teach people without getting tired" (Con, 2000)^[1]. He believed that education was a reflection of a country's essence, stating, "Stepping into a country can reveal its educational standards. Born around 500 years before Christ, Confucius established the cultural foundation of China and is celebrated as "China's first teacher." During his lifetime, he attracted a substantial following of students. Although Confucius imparted his wisdom orally, his disciples later compiled these teachings into the *Analects*, also known as the "Sayings of Confucius" (Osno, 2007)^[4]. The cornerstone of Confucian education is moral cultivation. Confucius advocated for a society led by highly ethical scholar-bureaucrats and governed by morality, with a strong emphasis on hierarchical relationships. His ethical teachings were encapsulated in six classic texts—the *Classic of Poetry*, *Book of Documents*, *Book of Rites*, *Classic of Music*, *Book of Changes*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals* as well as in the six arts: rites, music, archery, chariotry, calligraphy, and mathematics. In his pedagogical approach, Confucius placed

virtue above wisdom, asserting that true education is about cultivating a moral character that embodies filial piety, respectfulness, sincerity, and universal love. He emphasized that learning should enhance one's ability to live harmoniously within society and promote the cultivation of benevolence, which he regarded as the pinnacle of moral development. Confucius stated that a scholar must prioritize nurturing benevolence over mere survival and pursue it with unwavering dedication, even above respecting the teacher. Confucius highlighted the intrinsic value of learning for everyone, noting that each virtue, when not coupled with learning, leads to various pitfalls. For instance, he warned that the love of benevolence without learning results in foolishness, love of wisdom without learning leads to instability, and love of honesty without learning causes harm. This perspective underscores the necessity of comprehensive education to prevent these hidden detriments.

Moreover, Confucius's teachings emphasized the practical application of learning. He admonished his disciples that knowledge must be useful in life, comparing the neglect of applying one's learning to a waste of effort. Confucius proposed a hierarchical social structure maintained by a benevolent leader acting in the best interest of the people, akin to a feudal system. Confucius also asserted that the ultimate purpose of learning is personal development. He taught that education should focus on life and conduct, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling one's role in society with integrity and virtue. Confucius advised learners to love their parents, respect siblings and elders, speak truthfully, and associate closely with virtuous individuals. Once these fundamental duties are mastered, one should then pursue the study of literature and the six arts.

In addition to the above purposes, Confucius also focused on the purpose of finding the truth in the truth. The truth here means morality. Confucius himself has always shown a fervent devotion to morality in learning. Confucius not only focused on complete personality, using education to expand people's knowledge, but also paid attention to the love of the mind, wisdom, benevolence, and courage to teach people to fulfill the moral man. So any individual, if not shaped by education, cannot have a perfect personality. Confucius said, "If you want to be benevolent but don't learn, that cover will turn out to be stupid. If you want wisdom but don't learn, that cover is empty. If you want to believe but don't learn, that cover is the enemy. If you want to go straight but don't learn, that cover is in a hurry. If you want to be brave but don't learn, that cover is chaos. If you want to get tough but don't study, that cover is crazy" (*Analects of Confucius*) (Con, 2000)^[1]. Therefore, the aim in carrying out the entire educational process according to Confucius is to reform, foster and perfect the personality.

To achieve the highest efficiency in the process of teaching, Confucius created a relatively complete system of educational methods in the teaching process.

Methods of suggesting, dialogue between teachers and learners, to promote the subjective dynamism and independent thinking and creativity of learners. Confucius said, "He who is not eager to understand, I cannot help him to understand. Those who do not try to express their opinions, I cannot reveal them. Whoever knows one corner well, but refuses to base it on to know the other three corners, I will not teach him anymore" (*Analects of Confucius*) (Con, 2000)^[1]. He asked learners to be able to observe clearly and reason, from one thing to know other things, from this to know that

(Analects of Confucius) (Con, 2000) ^[1]. This shows that Khong Tu always uses suggestive methods for learners to think independently. The teacher is only a guide and suggestion in the teaching process. Thus, learners “after hearing a lot, must choose the right things to follow; After seeing a lot, remembering the things that need attention, that's why you become a third person” (Analects of Confucius) (Con, 2000) ^[1]. In his teaching method, Confucius always requires learners to combine learning with deep thinking. Because, “learning without thinking is not smart. If you think without learning, your heart will not be at peace” (Analects of Confucius) (Con, 2000) ^[1]. Only when students have that spirit Confucius will teach them. Thus, according to Confucius, it is necessary to maximize the ability of learners for the most effective teaching process.

In teaching Confucius also attaches special importance to the exemplary method. Confucius said that education has something to teach but not to say, students can draw lessons by looking at the teacher's attitude, gestures and behavior. Not only that, each example can become a living lesson, the example, the perfect personality, the seriousness of the teacher is a great lesson for the students. Confucius himself, with the spirit of learning without getting bored, teaching tirelessly, throughout his life constantly reviewing and studying the knowledge of the ancients, remains a shining example for his students to follow. This is also the basis of the process of education and self-education for the teacher, and at the same time gradually forms the tradition of "respecting teacher, and respecting life" for future generations.

Based on the principle of "optional teaching" - attaching importance to determining the object of education through the language and behavior of the students to determine the appropriate educational content - According to Confucius, it is necessary to classify the objects in the process of education. Confucius said, “From the middle level up, we teach the higher morality. From the middle class down, one should not teach superior morality” (Analects of Confucius). That is, to be effective in the educational process, it is necessary to personalize the object. Each audience is different, Confucius has a different way of teaching through which he wants the audience to understand and correct him.

In the process of teaching, Confucius also advised his students to associate theory with practice, to practice words with deeds, and to oppose mere talk and study. If people only know how to study things in books, it is useless. It is like a person who has memorized all three hundred verses of the Poetry and cannot respond when he is on a mission. Then there's no point in studying. Therefore, learning associated with practice will promote the highest efficiency to make rapid progress in the learning process, Confucius always reminds learners to regularly review old, know new, regularly practice, cultivate and study. Because “reviewing what has been learned, knowing new things from there, one can become the teacher of the world” Analects of Confucius (Analects of Confucius) (Con, 2000) ^[1]. Therefore, it is necessary to regularly learn from those who have gone before, combining with practice the knowledge learned.

To do so, in the learning process, learners must not be complacent, not conceited, or ignorant. Even himself, Confucius always humbly admits that he is not born with a natural knowledge of morality, but is just a fan of the scriptures and poems of the ancient sages, so we try to learn ethics (Analects of Confucius 19) (Con, 2000) ^[1]. He always

advises learners to constantly practice and cultivate the knowledge they have learned so that the acquisition of new knowledge is easier. Learning is a long-term process of accumulating knowledge, so Confucius advises that you need to regularly practice with diligence, practice, and perseverance. Every day you learn more things you haven't already known, so you are called an avid learner.

In the process of teaching, Confucius is not only interested in methods for students to absorb lessons effectively, but he is also interested in training attitudes for learners. Confucius always reminds if you want to study and practice to become a virtuous person, you must always have an attitude of progress, overcoming, and not being complacent. What I can say I know, what I can't say I don't know, that's what I know. Just like, "he who is not strong enough to go halfway, give up. But it's not that he doesn't have enough strength, because he has already set the road level, to that point, he won't go any further” (Analects of Confucius 10) (Con, 2000) ^[1]. Since then, in the learning process, you must always try your best, be diligent, and hone your knowledge. To achieve the results, people who are excited and think ethically are happy until they forget their worries and sorrows; and focus on learning until you don't know the old age is coming to you (Analects of Confucius 18) (Con, 2000) ^[1].

Confucius also advises learners to "have to work hard to learn as if they can't keep up with others, for fear of being abandoned" (Analects of Confucius 17) (Con, 2000) ^[1]; must study anytime, anywhere, because “out of the three people on the road, me and two other people, someone must be my teacher. I choose this person's goodness and rightness to follow; I consider the evil and evil of the other person to correct myself” (Analects of Confucius 21) (Con, 2000) ^[1]. In studying, Confucius also reminded him to always be careful, so he advised, "You should listen to a lot. What you have heard that you don't show, but have doubts, put it aside, don't say it. As for the details that I have not heard, I should speak cautiously. Thus, there are very few opportunities for me to be rebuked by people. Should see for many. What you don't see clearly, can be dangerous, put aside, don't do it. As for the things that we consider not harmful, we should do it with caution” (Analects of Confucius) (Con, 2000) ^[1]. Thus, in the teaching process, besides teaching morality to students, Confucius also cares about training students' attitudes, so that each student can perfect both literature and quality.

Through the study of Confucius's educational thought, we found the following advanced points.

Although he appeared for a long time in human history, his method of training human resources is very advanced. In training human resources, Confucius advocated training according to the requirements of society, his purpose was to train people to be mandarins in the court, his training method was more specialized in each preferential case of each person. “Confucius believed that having ideals was the first step to educate student to be a moral person. He attached importance to having ideals in moral education. He indicated that everybody should have his life goals and ideals. Furthermore, Confucius instructed students to have ideals and confirm belief. Confucius often discussed ideals with students. He also asserted that the ideals should be referred to virtues” (Xie, Y. and Chen, G.E. 2013) ^[7]. Based on the principle of "optional teaching" - attaching importance to identifying educational objects through language and behavior of students to determine appropriate educational content.

When the purpose and object of Confucius training are

determined, teaching methods such as the method of opening and dialogue between the teacher and the learner are identified, to promote the subjective dynamism and independence in thinking and creativity of students. To make rapid progress in the learning process, Confucius always reminds learners to regularly review old, known knowledge, regularly practice, cultivate and study. "Not only did Confucius encourage his students to make effort in learning, he also encouraged them to make this effort by allowing them room to think for themselves" (Xie, 2013) ^[7].

To be persuasive in teaching Confucius also attaches great importance to the exemplary method. Confucius also advised his students to associate theory with practice, to practice words with deeds, and to oppose mere talk and study.

Thus, we can see that if we remove the limitations due to class and history, Confucius's educational ideas still have practical values in education in general and the training of human resources in the social sciences and humanities in particular. When training, the school must determine who to train? Do raining and how to train? Do learners have that knack? After we have identified the above problems, we will start to work on effective training methods. Confucius emphasized the method of dialogue with students and the method of setting examples. This can be seen as one of the highlights of his thought.

The study of Confucius' educational thought has attracted the attention of many researchers. However, researchers all say that Confucius directed his educational views to the ruling class. We believe that, in any historical period, every activity in society is a tool to serve the ruling class. "Confucius' teaching-learning movement along a modeling-imitating principle with the saintly teacher king observes-follows the Dao movement and the subjects observe-follow the exemplary king and get transformed in so doing" (Zhao, W. 2017) ^[8]. However, each different historical period will have a corresponding ruling class. When studying his thought, we should not stand on this historical point of view to judge the previous historical period. On the contrary, when we study an idea, we must attach it to the historical period in which it was born to evaluate its positive aspects as well as its limitations and draw historical values for the present day. The fourth industrial revolution is taking place, in order to meet the needs, the educational thoughts of Confucius still have values that we need to pay attention to.

Some argue that Confucius' educational thought is aimed at "teaching without exception", focusing on educating everyone in society. "Confucian, family-centric nation which extols such virtues as honoring the elderly and saving for the future" (Kajawo, S.C.R. 2019). This view is completely correct because the fourth industrial revolution has taken place, the issue of human resource training is increasingly important. The training of human resources should aim to train a team with knowledge and expertise, capacity, dynamism, creativity, and ethics. Education needs to be directed towards comprehensive human development to serve socio-economic development to make the nation prosperous and people happy. Human resource training is a key task to bring a country to long-term and sustainable development. To do that, we need to have a long-term strategy, to consider human resource training as a key issue for the development of the country. The main objective and task for human resource training are to train a team with full capacity and quality, with national spirit and patriotism.

The opinion that Confucius put too much emphasis on moral

education without paying attention to technical education is a limitation. We think that Confucius lived in a very chaotic society, the cause of which was moral degradation, so his emphasis on morality is understandable. The fourth industrial revolution requires building global citizenship. Global citizens must be equipped with common moral standards including virtue and talent, of which virtue is the root. To reach that comprehensive human model, people must first have virtue. Therefore, focusing on moral education too to build qualified human resources to self-regulate their behavior, make society healthy is an extremely important task that cannot be taken lightly in the process of educating people today.

Especially in the current period, the issue of moral education becomes more and more urgent. The process of economic development has partly met the material and spiritual life of the people. However, there are also alarming situations in terms of social ethics such as weak training of human resources, equal assessments of learners leading to the "introduction" of a series of weak resources, weak professional human resources waste human resources; the fact that both teachers and students are not legitimate, have not done their duties properly still exists; real degree for false learning still exists, etc. These inadequacies probably stem from the training of human resources in favor of teaching "words", not focusing on teaching people. It is the laxity of moral education or the fact that moral education is still formal and monotonous that is one of the basic causes leading to the phenomenon of moral degradation. Therefore, the prominent concern in today's society is ideological, political, and ethical education in the training of human resources.

To be able to train human resources with enough virtue and talent, it is necessary to drastically renew the cause of education and training, forming people imbued with national cultural identity; steadfastly uphold national independence and national sovereignty; proud of the nation, love the homeland, etc. To meet that requirement, education needs to have the right views on education. First of all, paying special attention to the issue of moral education. A strong nation is a nation with progressive education, in that line of thinking stands out and focuses on moral education, political thought, and vocational education. The training of a human resource with a heart, a vision, and a mind is not only moral equipment for learners, but even teachers need to be morally equipped because it is the teacher who forms the value of the human resources and moral values for students.

Confucius's educational philosophy is renowned for its diverse and rich array of teaching methods. These methods include leading by example, classifying subjects, encouraging problem-solving, and integrating theory with practical application. This multifaceted approach promotes creative dynamism and fosters student initiative, a perspective that remains highly relevant today. The concept of student-centered learning, where students' active engagement is prioritized, echoes Confucius's emphasis on practical application alongside theoretical learning. This connection illustrates how modern educational practices continue to build upon the foundational principles established by Confucius. Beyond his innovative teaching methods, Confucius also provided profound insights into moral education, which are crucial for developing human resources. His approach to moral education begins with individuals' innate feelings, which are then nurtured and transformed into societal values and ethical standards. This process aims to

cultivate individuals who voluntarily adhere to moral behavior while respecting the law. Confucius's methods are characterized by their flexibility; they are adapted to suit different individuals and circumstances, rather than adhering to rigid concepts and norms. In today's educational landscape, the principles advocated by Confucius are invaluable. They underscore the importance of not just imparting knowledge but also fostering the ability to apply this knowledge practically. This ensures that students are equipped not only with intellectual understanding but also with the ethical grounding necessary to navigate and contribute to society effectively.

Overall, Confucius's educational philosophy, with its focus on holistic development, remains a vital influence. It highlights the enduring significance of balancing moral education with practical skills, a balance that continues to shape modern educational theories and practices.

Conclusion

Confucius's educational philosophy is a comprehensive framework that meticulously addresses the purpose, content, and methodologies of education. At its heart, this philosophy places a strong emphasis on morality as the essential element of education. Confucius championed a holistic approach, integrating various methods to cultivate virtue and wisdom. Central to his teachings is the idea that education should not only impart knowledge but also foster ethical development. Confucius believed in leading by example and structuring the curriculum around ethical principles. He encouraged the use of thought-provoking questions and nurtured a spirit of inquiry among students, promoting active engagement and critical thinking. A distinctive feature of Confucius's educational thought is his approach to moral education. He advocated for beginning with the individual's innate feelings and gradually instilling societal values and ethical standards. This process was designed to lead to a voluntary and genuine adherence to virtuous behavior, rather than mere compliance. By paying close attention to both the content and methods of education, Confucius's teachings remain highly relevant, especially in the context of the fourth industrial revolution. As we navigate the complexities of modern education, his principles offer timeless guidance on integrating moral and intellectual development, preparing individuals not just for careers, but for thoughtful and ethical participation in society.

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