

# The Importance of Traditional Culture in University Education

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**Abstract:** With the heightened value of education, the role of traditional culture in teaching has gradually emerged. The introduction of traditional culture into education not only encourages the cultivation of students' moral quality but also boosts the extension and inheritance of traditional culture. Therefore, this paper examines the effective combination of traditional culture and education in colleges and universities throughout China. This paper aims to highlight the important role of traditional culture in university education and provides numerous definitive strategies for implementation.

**Keywords:** *traditional culture; university education; importance*

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## 0 Introduction

The integration of traditional culture in higher education is beneficial in improving the overall development of students and individual characteristics. Through the lens of traditional culture in education, it helps to establish moral values and foster a genuine national spirit by cultivating patriotic sentiments among students.<sup>[1,2]</sup> Due to the mass globalization of the economy, the influence of the Western culture has led many students to overlook the long-established Chinese traditions, especially in an educational setting. With the growing trend of development in cultural diversity, university students must reinforce the subject of traditional culture in their education, which is known to be a mandatory requirement to the development of traditional Chinese culture and the establishment of a balanced society.

## 1 The important roles of traditional culture in university education

### 1.1 The negative impact caused by the neglect of traditional cultures among university students

Traditional Chinese culture is the accumulation of China's 5000-year cultural history. The study of traditional Chinese culture is crucial to the understanding of China's distinguishing cultural characteristics. Imperceptibly, traditional Chinese culture has a direct impact on China's historical development process. It is also a symbol of China's cultural concept and ideologies. Through the years of historical developments, Chinese culture continues to innovate and contributes to the financial prosperity of the future generations. The offering of spiritual food - like most of the traditional Chinese cultures - possesses significant national characteristics and rich connotations to the present society. However, the study of relevant practice surveys illustrates that existing colleges and universities in China heavily emphasized the teaching of professional knowledge and skills, disregarding the study of humanities. As a result, many students display a lack of humanistic qualities and an inadequate understanding of the traditional Chinese culture (a total of 100 people were surveyed, as shown in Table 1). At the same time, the current state of education on traditional culture in the current universities showed that there is a scarce understanding of famous Chinese philosophers, but instead a widespread influence of Western bureaucracy and financial materialism. As a result, the neglect of traditional Chinese culture by present-day university students has negatively affected the development and

**Table 1: Questionnaire on the understanding of traditional Chinese culture among university students**

| Traditional Chinese culture | Traditional festivals | National studies | Traditional clothing | Traditional habits |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Number of people (%)        | 68 (68.0)             | 60 (60.0)        | 32 (32.0)            | 48 (48.0)          |

inheritance of Chinese culture, which impedes the development of a respected social culture. To effectively encourage and establish the importance of traditional culture among university students, it is highly essential to reinforce the education of traditional culture by means of emphasizing the political and ideological subjects of colleges and universities. One must also effectively implement a working plan for traditional cultural education; innovate educational concepts and teaching models that appeal to the students' interest; and enhance the value of traditional culture in tertiary education.

### **1.2 Traditional culture is beneficial to the growth of university students**

In traditional Chinese culture, Confucianism is the core philosophy that has significantly propelled human civilization in China. To the cultivate students to be well assimilated to modern society and promote the development of the present society, it is vital to be rooted in traditional Chinese culture where it emphasizes in establishing the transcendent ideals of traditional Chinese society such as high moral values and the development of noble sentiments.

First of all, it is imperative to cultivate universal moral sentiments among the students. The traditional culture of China emphasizes the interests of the state as well as the community. It advocates on national and collective interests in front of personal interests, which plays an important guiding role in the development of the country and individuals. In Confucianism, it is believed that the individual's embodiment of its core values would establish a supportive anchor during a national crisis, where people of China would be willing to sacrifice themselves for the country's interests. With rapid reformation and liberation, China needs remain rooted in national spirit as a starting point and provide the appropriate guidance to university students to promote economic growth. In addition, college students should be encouraged to accept the education of traditional Chinese culture with enthusiasm and eagerness that would elevate noble moral sentiments; establish a sense of national responsibility and self-confidence; and effectively incorporate their individual values with the development of the country, thereby

endorsing stable and positive values that are beneficial to social development.

Furthermore, one must encourage students to be independent and intellectually determined. Confucianism regards "benevolence" as its core value that is evident based on the concrete, systematic, and comprehensive analysis of the connotation of benevolence. What is favored in benevolence is the value for human relationships, that is, in social activities and interactions with others where people support, respect, encourage, and contribute to one another. When confrontation arises, individuals should be encouraged to reflect issues from another party's perspective, be willing to compromise when necessary, and be understanding and tolerable to others. Students who are educated in these values would highly benefit from it. However, a study on the current state of university students reveals that of 90 students who grew up as a single child in the presence of a full and loving attention of their family are susceptible to developing a self-centered personality when socializing with others. In this case, they are only concerned with their own well-being and possess a lack of awareness toward other people's needs. Another study shows that during the process of improving the educational curriculum, the flaws of traditional educational approaches are still present where too much emphasis is being placed on the students' ability to do well in examinations, along with the lack of attention to students' comprehensive ability and personal values. In addition, the lack of traditional cultural content in tertiary education leads to a poor understanding of traditional Chinese cultures, which slightly inhibits the development of a harmonious society. Therefore, to achieve a balanced education in China, one must effectively implement the study of traditional culture into tertiary education, establish positive values onto the students' characteristics, optimize educational resources, and arise from the restraints of the traditional examination-oriented education in China.

Finally, one should adhere to the principle of good faith. In the traditional Chinese culture, people ascribe great importance to honesty. Honesty is a fundamental trait and a benchmark to the Chinese communities throughout the generations. The locals believe that it

**Table 2: Questionnaire regarding the lack of honesty among college students**

| Student's dishonesty | Cheated in examinations | Withheld repayment of student loans | Expelled from employment |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Number of people (%) | 25 (25.0)               | 2 (2.0)                             | 18 (18.0)                |

is only through honesty that a society could achieve moral development. Therefore, honesty lies in the social development of individuals. It also plays a very important role (as shown in Table 2) for the growth of the economic market where the pressure to compete in the society is constantly growing. College students are facing tremendous pressure to excel in their education and careers. In this situation, the principle of good faith is consequently violated as it not only negatively affected the individual well-being of students but also weakens the foundation of a harmonious society. Therefore, mentors of tertiary education should reinforce the important roles of traditional culture with rationale and consider the long-term development of students while fully utilizing the principles of honesty and trustworthiness. Through this, it strengthens morality and establishes the appropriate values of students. The principle of honesty and trustworthiness is guided by the norms of behavior; therefore, character development can only be justified through theory and continuous learning.

### **1.3 Understanding the inheritance and development of traditional culture**

In the process of traditional cultural education in colleges and universities, tutors need to emphasis on a culture that is most applicable to everyday life to instill the cultural interests among students. Historically, China's traditional culture is extensive and profound; it plays an important role in the construction and development of a harmonious society. It is also the foundation for constructing a national spirit among the Chinese civilization. Therefore, it is highly essential to apply the long-established traditions of Chinese culture as an educational resource. Despite the diverse facets of traditional Chinese culture in terms of content and approach, it is still grounded in the same connotation. Consequently, the construction of a harmonious society must be deeply rooted in the fertile soil of traditional culture to ensure the development of a dynamic society. College students are encouraged to undertake the mission of inheriting and extending the traditional Chinese culture beyond the realms of China. In the dissemination of traditional culture, the key responsibility for the

students is to recognize the reconstruction of their own traditional cultural knowledge and to strengthen the standardization of individual words and actions based on traditional cultural knowledge, along with establishing a meaningful outlook on life and personal values. Furthermore, by cooperating state interests with personal values, it promotes the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture and lays a solid foundation for the construction of a positive learning environment and personal development of students.

## **2 Strategies for implementing chinese culture in university education**

### **2.1 Emphasize on the cultivation of students' passions**

In traditional Chinese culture, "benevolence" has always been the core value and an important guiding role in the construction and development of China's harmonious society. The philanthropic views and progressive ideas such as "self-discipline and social commitment" and "self-sacrificing" reflect humanity's emotional state of mind; hence, they are the key to administering the development of social civilization. Yet, there is an increasing presence of pressure on people's lives. The rise of materialistic pursuits deterioration's the traditional moral values that were once established. At present, people compare individual gains and losses as the main criterion for communication; as a result, it leads to unnecessary confrontations among people. Emphasizing traditional culture in colleges and universities helps to establish the right moral values among students, which provides a significant development to the personal lives of not only students but also most importantly the society. The emphasis of "harmony and difference" in traditional Chinese culture is relevant in the modern-day society as it similarly reflects the thought process of the present-day civilians. For example, one of the Analects of Confucius, "The gentleman and the difference, the same villain and not," emphasizes on the importance of getting along with each other where the gentlemen advocates for tolerance. The concept of "harmony and difference" is also present throughout

the history of China. Likewise, in the present-day society, the idea of “harmony and difference” is also widely used in the relationship between society and the state. Therefore, the development of an impactful and effective curriculum in traditional Chinese culture is necessary for cultivating students to develop an open mind, inclusive attitude, and a positive mentality.

## 2.2 Attend to the cultivation of self-reliance in students

“The movement of heaven is full of power. Thus, the superior man makes himself strong and untiring,” is an example of the Analects of Confucius that pursues the idea of the cultivation of self-reliance. The cultivation of self-reliance is highly valuable in motivating students to work hard, be independent, and to continuously make an improvement. Ever since the rapid reformation and development of China, many prominent changes have taken place in the society. At present, China is in a period of transformation in its society and economy. This resulted in numerous discrepancies in the development of society. Therefore, it is necessary to cater to a variety of interests; implement multiple advancements in politics, economy, and culture; and cultivate innovative and honest talents within the nation. The traditional Chinese culture has shaped the integrity of students; it boosts optimism and enforces the initiative to encourage students to be resilient in periods of great difficulties.

## 2.3 Monitor the guidance of students’ ambitions

In the Confucian canon of “the great learning,” “The way of ultimate wisdom is the comprehension of absolute integrity, genital development of the common people, and endless pursuit of the perfection of humanities” is a passage that is meant to guide people to constantly improve themselves and their spiritual realm to achieve their personal ideals.<sup>[3]</sup> The key concept of Chinese philosophy is also centered on “virtue.” Apart from its significance on the personification of a virtuous individual, it also emphasizes the virtues of the state and society. With the increasingly evolving society, corruption and unhealthy competitions under the market economic system have resulted in unnecessary pressures for college students to obtain employment even before

graduation. Living under the hasty pressures of society, students these days are more concerned about skills that are only relevant to employment and acquiring certificates based on corporate requirements; this resulted in a serious neglect of self-cultivation. The gradual decline of the moral construct in the workplace is also believed to be caused by the assumption that moral cultivation impedes progress in the enterprise. Therefore, in tertiary education, it is necessary to emphasize the idea of “stopping in perfect goodness” as prescribed in “the great learning” so that students recognize that a prosperous life can be achieved, but one must also define their own purpose in life and avoid the influences of impetuous mentality.

## 3 Conclusion

The current state of China’s social and economic transformation has enabled great potentials for a myriad of development in its economy, employment, and culture. Unfortunately, the impacts of social reformation resulted in the neglect of China’s traditional culture.<sup>[4]</sup> The traditional Chinese culture is the cultural essence and spiritual wealth of the Chinese nation; it functions as the basis for promoting the development of a socialist state and an inspiring archetype to the citizens. Therefore, college lecturers and professors are encouraged to reinforce the studies of traditional Chinese culture in tertiary education so that it ensures the cultivation of well-informed graduates with high moral values and a virtuous personality.

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