

## *Original Paper*

# Confucian Sports Thought: Combining Sports with Education

TANG YAO<sup>1</sup>, CHENG YANG<sup>2</sup> & ZHOU YAJun<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Guiyang Institute of Humanities and Technology, Guiyang, CHINA

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Physical Education, Guizhou Normal University, Guiyang, CHINA

<sup>3</sup> College of Physical Education, Guizhou Institute of Technology, Guiyang, CHINA

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### **Abstract**

*Since the reform and opening up, China has developed rapidly, and people's ideas, ethics, and values have been constantly changing. Because of the changes in the morals and values of students' parents, it has also brought a significant impact on education. They only focus on student's academic achievements, and students' physical quality and moral education are ignored. How should school education do? China's Confucianism may inspire us. Confucianism attaches importance to moral, intellectual, and physical education, and emphasizes the all-round development of human character, intelligence, and body. Confucianism integrates ethical code into physical activities and achieves the purpose of education. Confucianism inspires us that school physical education should not only focus on improving students' physical quality but also pay attention to its educational function.*

### **Keywords**

*Confucianism, Physical Education, Confucian Ethical Code, Archery Rite, School Education*

## **1. Introduction**

Since the Reform and Opening-up, Chinese society has developed rapidly, and people's ideas, ethics, and values are constantly changing. Some people's morals and values have also been seriously distorted, education is also affected by these phenomena. Education has to adapt to the needs of students' parents due to the impact of social and parental values. Chinese school education has become the only teaching function while ignoring educating students. However, the most important purpose of school education is to cultivate people's morality, cultivate people with complete personalities and abide by social norms and order.

Chinese Confucian culture has been inherited for more than 2000 years. The establishment of Confucian culture is a period of social transformation, to managing a social disorder. Confucian culture has made a beneficial contribution to humanization and national and social governance in various

historical periods of Chinese society (Zhang, 2012). We will discuss the Confucian education and training mode in order to find a new pattern for the utilitarian phenomenon of contemporary education.

## **2. Confucianism**

Confucianism began in the Pre-Qin Dynasty and was founded by Confucius. Confucianism has played a huge role in the formation of the character of the Chinese nation and the establishment of the image of China as a state of ceremonies (Sun, 2015; Zhang, 2006). Confucianism has integrated the cultivation of morals into specific physical activities. It has had a profound impact on China and even the world since its formation. Its ideological core is the moral education concept of benevolence and propriety. Studying Confucianism is conducive to understanding the country's past, recognizing reality, and planning the future (Li, 1988). Confucianism pays attention to the cultivation of human character. Confucianism advocates education without discrimination, and cultivates citizens with both ability and political integrity. The role of Confucianism in cultivating personal morality lies in its existence as the spiritual sustenance of human beings, regulating interpersonal relations and standardizing social order (Yang, 2002).

## **3. Lijiao (Confucian Ethical Code)**

As the core of Confucianism, the ethical code is the core content and leading role of ancient Chinese education. Propriety is the standard of all customs and behaviors in the whole Chinese world. Traditional Confucianism has always regarded the cultivation of an ideal personality as its ultimate educational goal. The ethical system and ethical ideology are the main axis of China's feudal traditional ideology and culture (Zhang, 2008). Lijiao is an important means and way of spreading, popularizing, and inheriting ethics, rites, and rules. It is also an important content of ancient school education and the governing strategy of rulers of previous dynasties.

Lijiao includes two interpretations, one of which refers to the customs and ethics implemented by the enlightenment. Through the dissemination and inheritance of Lijiao, it can become ethics and rules. The second is the popularization, teaching, and education of rites, including the teaching and practice of rites and the cultivation of moral characters (Zhang, 2006; Wang et al., 2015b). Pre-Qin Confucian ethics code is a complete set of moral education theory systems about personal, family national, and natural ethics in traditional Chinese society. It is an educational thought and mode unique to China that complements ethical and political thoughts (Wang et al., 2015a).

## **4. Confucian Sports**

Confucius taught thousands of students during his lifetime, focusing on what he termed the Six Arts; these include music, archery, mathematics, ritual, chariot-riding, and calligraphy. And archery and chariot-riding are physical activities. In the Confucian school, many activities and behaviors in human social life have been incorporated into the general thinking of Confucianism and given higher

significance. Therefore physical activities have also been elevated as an idea. Physical education plays a very important role in Confucian culture. Although Confucius is a scholar, he has never neglected physical education. He advocates that both civil and martial arts should be developed with both body and mind, and physical education should be linked with morals. The Confucian view of sports is beyond the sports themselves and has a very high educational function (Cao et al., 2018). Confucianism advocates the idea of physical education with complete personality, and all-around development, and emphasizes the harmony and unity of body and spirit. The essence of Confucian sports thought is the practice of self-cultivation with propriety as the core and the philosophy of self-cultivation with benevolence as the core (Li, 2014). Confucian sports thought is based on social values. Confucian sports thought advocates that the body should meet social needs and reflect social values. Sports activities with social values as their attribution should first cultivate people's social morality. Confucian sports thought focuses on the cultivation of ideas, which is the embodiment of social ethics. Confucian sports thought stresses the unity of body and mind, that is, the cultivation of morality and personal conduct while physical activities, to achieve the ultimate goal of educating people (Wang, 2002). Confucius attached great importance to personal cultivation in sports competitions, pursued pleasure in sports, and believed that the standard of sports should be skills (Liu, 1998).

## 5. Archery Rites

Archery rites, which integrates sports, social norms, and moral, has important political significance and enlightens the public. It contains rich Confucian thoughts and is an important part of the Confucian culture (Li, 2017). Confucianism has formulated a set of systems that must be observed for archery. Through the cultivation and display of rites, archery has become a not only sport but also the cultivation and assessment of the moral cultivation of participants, giving this movement a special function of educating the public (Yuan, 2010).

Confucianism injected rich humanistic education thoughts into archery activities and endowed archery skills with certain etiquette pursuits, which made it become a unique cultural phenomenon of the Chinese nation in the era of advocating force. Archery is a collective moral education activity to maintain social order (Zhou & Ma, 2020). The contemporary practice of archery is conducive to the implementation of the educational concept of "unity of knowledge and action" in school education. We should excavate the connotation of archery, integrate it into modern physical education elements and transform it. The study of archery should summarize, and integrate modern education elements, and play to the modern inheritance of ancient archery (Song & Liu, 2017). Archery, which is of humanistic significance and social governance system, still has its enlightening and reference role in the governance of modern society (Zhang & Dai, 2020).

## 6. Discuss

School education should cultivate social talents with good academic achievements, and educate teenagers' moral character. Physical education teachers should also realize that the purpose of physical education is just not to teach skills, and should educate people. Physical education is also the education of rules. All sports have project rules. To carry out this sport, we must abide by the rules formulated by the project to carry it out smoothly. From this point of view, physical education also has some similarities with Confucian ethics. It is to teach people the code of conduct from the perspective of ideology, and all self-pursuit is carried out on the premise of observing the rules.

If human beings want to survive in the 21st century, they must look back 2500 years and absorb the wisdom of Confucius (Tang, 1996, p. 82). Rites lead ideals and beliefs, standardize behavior patterns, cultivate customs, and promote social governance (Wang et al., 2015b). Dr. Taylor the representative of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), said in his speech at the 2540 anniversary of Confucius' birthday and the symposium that today's prosperous and successful society, to a large extent, is still based on many values established and elaborated by Confucius. These values belong to China, also belong to the world, belong to the past, and will also reflect on today and the future (Tang, 1996).

## 7. Conclusions

Teenagers are the hope and future of a country and nation, and their moral character and physical quality are related to the future of the country and the nation. School education serves the country and the nation to cultivate talent in social needs. Only by cultivating social talents with excellent physical and moral qualities can we better promote the progress and development of the country. Confucian archery rites enlighten us that physical education can strengthen people's physiques, and we should pay attention to its educational function. School physical education should teach sports knowledge and skills, and cultivate people's morality. While teaching sports knowledge and skills, teachers also pay attention to the correct guidance and cultivation of students' morality, rules, and values. Such school physical education is qualified school physical education.

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