Comment on "Evaluation on the interaction between Chinese traditional philosophical culture and higher education ideas"

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The unique value of traditional Chinese philosophical culture, which intersected with contemporary higher education ideas, not only showcases the depth of China's philosophical heritage but also offers innovative pathways for incorporating this wisdom into modern educational practice. A thorough analysis of these intersections will shed light on potential enhancements and put forth practical recommendations for a comprehensive and efficient approach to education.

One of the key hurdles in contemporary higher education, not just in China but globally, is the excessive focus on theoretical instruction at the cost of practical application. This imbalance leads to graduates who are theoretically well-versed but lack the practical skills required for the job market. This issue is not confined to China; it resonates worldwide, as evidenced by various Western educational systems. For instance,

> [...] the German dual education system, a successful model, combines academic learning with practical work experience, ensuring that students are not only knowledgeable in theory but also proficient in practical skills, making them more adaptable and job-ready (Euler, 2013, p. 89).

By adopting similar approaches, China can boost the efficiency of its higher education, aligning educational outcomes with market demands and fostering a sense of global educational community.

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Confucianism, with its core principles of "ren" (benevolence) and "li" (ritual propriety), provides a robust ethical framework that can address current educational deficiencies. These principles emphasise moral education, social harmony, and the development of a well-rounded character. However, the implementation of these principles must go beyond superficial integration. Practical application of Confucian ideals in modern education could include mentorship programs focused on ethical development and service-learning projects that encourage social responsibility. For example, integrating community service into the curriculum can help students develop empathy and a sense of civic duty, aligning with the Confucian ideal of benevolence (Li, 2016). This approach not only addresses education's moral and ethical dimensions but also inspires students to be active contributors to society, a key benefit that is often overlooked in favour of academic achievements.

Although traditional Chinese philosophy offers profound insights, integrating Western educational theories can provide a more rounded approach. John Dewey's experiential learning theory, which emphasises learning through experience, complements Confucian ideas about the unity of knowledge and action. Dewey *et al.* (1938) argued that education should impart knowledge and engage students in meaningful activities that reflect real-life challenges. By combining Dewey's focus on practical engagement with Confucian ethical training, educators can create a comprehensive educational model that fosters intellectual and moral development. This integration can help create a more dynamic and responsive education system capable of adapting to the needs of modern society.

A significant omission in the current discourse on Chinese education is the development of critical thinking skills (Zhang, 2024). Traditional Chinese education has often been criticised for its rote learning methods, which stifle creativity and independent thought. To address this, educational practices should incorporate methods from both Confucian and Taoist traditions that encourage questioning and dialectical reasoning. For instance, […] debate clubs and Socratic seminars can be introduced to foster a culture of critical inquiry and innovation (Tweed; Lehman, 2002, p. 89-99). These practices align with the analytical methods found in Chinese philosophy and meet the modern need for innovative thinkers capable of solving complex problems. Encouraging students to question and critique established norms can lead to a more vibrant and progressive academic environment.

The rapid technological and economic changes of the 21st century demand a flexible and forward-thinking education system. Traditional Chinese philosophical principles, such as adaptability and balance, are particularly relevant in this context. The Taoist principle of "wu wei" (non-action) suggests a natural and effortless way of responding to challenges and advocats an education system that is adaptable and student-centred. This could involve personalised learning plans that cater to each student's needs and strengths, promoting a more inclusive and effective educational environment (Peng; Nisbett, 1999, p. 741-754).

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Such an approach ensures that education is not a one-size-fits-all solution but is tailored to foster individual talents and capabilities.

The fragmentation of disciplines is another significant challenge in modern education. Traditional Chinese philosophy's holistic approach to knowledge provides a counterpoint to this trend. Encouraging interdisciplinary studies can break down the barriers between different fields of knowledge, fostering a more integrated understanding. For example, courses that combine science and humanities can help students appreciate the broader implications of technological advancements and develop a more rounded perspective (Nisbett, 2003). Moreover, the emphasis on holistic education aligns with the Confucian ideal of self-cultivation. According to Confucius, education is not merely about acquiring knowledge but also about moral development and cultivating virtues. This perspective can be integrated into modern education by promoting character education programs focusing on integrity, perseverance, and respect. Such programs can help students develop a solid moral compass, which is essential for their personal and professional lives.

In addition, integrating traditional Chinese philosophical culture into modern higher education holds great promise for addressing many of the current educational challenges. By balancing theoretical knowledge with practical skills, fostering ethical and moral development, promoting critical thinking, and encouraging interdisciplinary learning, educators can create a more holistic and effective education system. This approach not only honours the rich philosophical traditions of China but also prepares students to navigate the complexities of the modern world with wisdom and adaptability.

In conclusion, synthesising ancient wisdom and contemporary educational needs can transform higher education into a more dynamic, inclusive, and practical system. By drawing on the strengths of traditional Chinese philosophy and modern educational theories, educators can develop a model that not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates ethical, innovative, and adaptable individuals who are ready to contribute to society in meaningful ways. However, it is essential to recognise that integrating these philosophies into modern education requires careful consideration and adaptation. Simply overlaying traditional principles onto contemporary systems may not be sufficient. There must be a dialogue between old and new ideas, ensuring that traditional wisdom is contextualised within modern frameworks. This involves critically examining both ideas to identify synergies and address potential conflicts.

Furthermore, the role of technology in education cannot be overlooked. The digital revolution has transformed the way knowledge is disseminated and accessed. Integrating traditional philosophical teachings with modern technology can enhance learning experiences and make education more accessible. Online platforms and digital tools can be used to deliver

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courses on Confucian and Taoist philosophies, making these teachings available to a global audience.

Ultimately, integrating traditional Chinese philosophical culture with modern higher education aims to create a more balanced, ethical, and effective educational system. This system should prepare students for the workforce and equip them with the moral and intellectual tools needed to lead fulfilling lives and contribute positively to society. By embracing ancient wisdom and contemporary advancements, we can build an education system that is rooted in tradition and responsive to the future.

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