

Research on the Integration of Confucian Ethical and Moral Views into Ideological and Political Education in Vocational Colleges

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Abstract: As an essential component of traditional culture, Pre-Qin Confucian ethical and moral views hold significant educational value for contemporary ideological and political education in vocational colleges. This paper delves into the specific connotations and contemporary educational values of Pre-Qin Confucian ethics, analyzing the current state of ideological and political education in vocational colleges. It proposes paths for integrating these ethical views into students' ideological and political education, such as dual-classroom models and online Confucian cultural platforms, emphasizing their practical significance.

Keywords: Pre-Qin Confucianism; Ethical and Moral Views; Ideological and Political Education; Higher vocational school; culture

1. INTRODUCTION

Chinese traditional culture, profound and long-standing, is a valuable spiritual heritage of the Chinese nation. Confucianism, as the core of traditional Chinese culture, has been the official ideology and cultural symbol since the Han dynasty, spreading widely and influencing globally. The ethical and moral views of Pre-Qin Confucianism originated in ancient ethical theories, becoming significant norms and tools in Chinese feudal society. These views are considered the foundation of Chinese moral thought, profoundly impacting feudal political systems and moral education.

In the context of modernization and globalization, the integration of traditional culture with modern educational systems has become a pressing issue. Vocational colleges, key institutions for training technical and skilled talents, face challenges in ideological and political education, including monotonous course content, rigid educational forms, and low student engagement, leading to unsatisfactory educational outcomes. Incorporating Pre-Qin Confucian ethical views into vocational ideological and political education enriches educational content, enhances its appeal and effectiveness, and improves students' moral and cultural cultivation. This approach not only inherits and promotes traditional Chinese culture but also innovates vocational education amidst modernization and globalization. By merging these elements, students can develop both technical skills and comprehensive moral and cultural qualities, better adapting to societal needs.

2. The Content and Contemporary Value of Pre-Qin Confucian Ethical and Moral Views

2.1 Core Content of Pre-Qin Confucian Ethical and Moral Views

Confucianism, a major representative of traditional Chinese thought, was founded by Confucius in the late Spring and Autumn period, becoming one of the main schools during the Hundred Schools of Thought era. Confucius emphasized "Ren" (benevolence), advocating virtuous governance, moral rule, and the use of "Li" (ritual) as behavioral norms and "Zhongyong" (the Doctrine of the Mean) as moral principles. These theories laid the foundation for Pre-Qin Confucianism.

Mencius expanded on Confucius' ideas, asserting the innate goodness of human nature and emphasizing benevolent governance and respect for public opinion. Xunzi, however, believed in the inherent evil of human nature, advocating for the maintenance of social order through rituals and laws, emphasizing "Lifelike Law." This paper primarily discusses the theories of Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi. As Xiong Shili noted, "Chinese academic thought should trace back to late Zhou, where Confucianism is orthodox, and Confucius is the great ancestor of Confucianism."

2.2 Main Characteristics of Pre-Qin Confucian Ethical and Moral Views

Pre-Qin Confucian ethical views have shown strong vitality through millennia, primarily characterized by their political functionality and inheritability. Firstly, their political nature emphasizes serving politics through ethics and morals. Confucian thought advocates governance by virtue, maintaining social order and long-term stability through moral education and rituals. Confucius believed that morality is the foundation of politics, with rulers exemplifying virtue to influence the populace, promoting a "rule by virtue" ideal. Mencius further developed this idea with his "benevolent governance" concept, emphasizing rulers' care for people's welfare, leading to the belief that "those who win the people's hearts win the world." Xunzi advocated for combining rituals and laws to achieve social harmony and stability. Despite different slogans, they all stressed the political function of ethics and morality.

Secondly, the inheritability of Pre-Qin Confucian ethical views extends their core values' influence beyond their era. Confucius' "rule by virtue" and "universal love and kindness" principles, Mencius' "great man spirit" emphasizing integrity and moral ideals, and Xunzi's methods for moral education still hold universal significance today, providing valuable insights for contemporary moral education and social governance.

2.3 The Educational Functions of Pre-Qin Confucian Ethical and Moral Views

The ethical and moral views of Pre-Qin Confucianism are an important part of ancient Chinese thought and culture. Their rich concepts and methods of moral education have significant reference value for modern education, especially in ideological and political education, patriotic education, and civic moral education. Pre-Qin Confucianism emphasizes the primacy of moral education and the unity of knowledge and action. Through moral cultivation and practice, it helps students achieve comprehensive development, shape the spirit of a true gentleman, and promote the construction of socialist spiritual civilization.

In terms of educational content, Pre-Qin Confucianism emphasizes patriotism, advocating that both rulers and the people should prioritize national interests and maintain national unity and stability. Confucius' concept of "cultivating oneself, regulating the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world" highlights the close relationship between personal moral cultivation and state governance. This can guide students to establish a correct view of the country and a sense of social responsibility, fostering patriotism and a spirit of dedication. In civic moral education, Pre-Qin Confucianism advocates "morality first," and also believes that moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic education should develop in a coordinated manner. Mencius' "spirit of a true gentleman" emphasizes that individuals should have firm beliefs and noble moral ideals, inspiring people to constantly pursue progress and self-improvement. Modern education can draw on this thought to focus on cultivating students' comprehensive qualities, promoting their overall development in various aspects.

The unity of knowledge and action is an important feature of Confucian ethics. Confucius emphasized that learning is not just about accumulating knowledge but also about applying knowledge in practice to achieve the unity of knowledge and action. Zengzi also stressed improving moral cultivation through reflection. This idea has practical value in modern education, guiding students to put moral concepts into action and enhancing their moral cultivation through actual behavior.

In addition, Pre-Qin Confucianism proposed a systematic set of methods for moral cultivation and practice, which are of great significance to the education of both teachers and students in higher education institutions. For example, Zengzi advocated "reflecting on oneself thrice a day," Confucius emphasized "seeing the good in others and thinking of equaling them; seeing the bad in others and examining oneself," and "learning without thinking is labor lost; thinking without learning is perilous," Mencius promoted "seeking within oneself," and Xunzi believed that "a gentleman who is broadly learned and daily examines himself will be clear in knowledge and free from faults in action." Besides these moral concepts, Pre-Qin Confucianism also proposed interpersonal principles such as the Doctrine of the Mean, Mencius' idea of "respecting the elderly as one's own elders

and caring for others' children as one's own," the "spirit of a true gentleman" from Mencius, and Xunzi's "emphasizing rituals and valuing the law." Pre-Qin Confucianism's emphasis on the pursuit of sagehood, upright character, prioritizing righteousness over personal gain, and the traditional virtues of selflessness has profoundly influenced the shaping of the excellent spiritual character of the Chinese nation.

Drawing on the ethical and moral views of Pre-Qin Confucianism can enhance the level of moral education in modern education and provide valuable ideological resources for cultivating young people with noble moral qualities and a sense of social responsibility in the new era.

3. The Current Lack of Integration of Pre-Qin Confucian Ethical and Moral Views in Ideological and Political Education in Vocational Colleges

As an important part of traditional culture, the ethical and moral views of Pre-Qin Confucianism are a valuable spiritual wealth of the Chinese nation. They not only provided a theoretical basis for moral education and the political system in ancient feudal society but also have important implications for modern ideological and political education. However, the current ideological and political education in vocational colleges is insufficient in integrating Pre-Qin Confucian ethical and moral views and needs further exploration and application to enhance educational effectiveness and students' moral literacy.

In the curriculum system of ideological and political education in vocational colleges, the arrangement for traditional Confucian culture, especially Pre-Qin Confucian ethical and moral views, is not systematic or scientific enough. The current curriculum, although covering some traditional cultural content, mainly offers it as an elective overview, lacking in-depth special studies and systematic teaching arrangements. The ideological and political education in vocational colleges primarily relies on Marxist ideological and political education theories and modern Western ethical theories, with insufficient emphasis on traditional Confucian culture. This leads to students' inability to fully understand the contemporary significance of Confucian ethical and moral views in modern society.

Moreover, the ideological and political education in vocational colleges often focuses on theoretical inculcation while neglecting the practical application of traditional moral education. Traditional Confucian culture emphasizes the unity of knowledge and action, combining learning with practice. However, the current ideological and political education remains mostly theoretical, lacking specific practical elements. This results in students being unable to apply the moral knowledge they have learned to real-life situations, lacking effective solutions and moral judgment abilities when facing actual moral issues.

Additionally, the knowledge level and traditional cultural literacy of teachers need improvement. In vocational colleges, teachers engaged in ideological and political education have often received more training in Marxist ideological and political education, with insufficient understanding and mastery of traditional Confucian culture. This limitation in teachers' knowledge directly affects the quality of teaching

Confucian ethical and moral views in ideological and political education. Teachers cannot deeply explore the essence of Confucian ethical and moral views in their lectures, nor can they guide students to fully understand and apply traditional moral thought.

4. Pathways for Integrating Pre-Qin Confucian Ethical and Moral Views into Ideological and Political Education in Vocational Colleges

4.1 Developing a Dual-Classroom Model for Ideological and Political Education

The ethical and moral views of Pre-Qin Confucianism are the important foundations of traditional Chinese thought. Integrating them into the ideological and political education in colleges can open up new directions for this field. In theoretical classrooms, ideological and political education theories should be combined with the ethical and moral views of Pre-Qin Confucianism. The theoretical courses of ideological and political education are the main platforms for students to receive and learn, which are also crucial periods for forming students' worldviews and values. Therefore, the textbooks for ideological and political courses should be based on students' ideological conditions, incorporating local traditional cultural resources, absorbing the essence of Confucian ethical and moral views, and compiling unique school-based textbooks to supplement existing materials and ensure their content keeps pace with the times. Additionally, Chinese traditional culture should be closely integrated with Marxist theory, enriching and supplementing Marxist theory with the essence of Confucian culture. This not only increases the depth and breadth of theoretical courses but also enhances students' cultural confidence and moral cultivation through the edification of traditional culture, promoting their comprehensive development.

Moreover, a "dual-classroom" approach should be used to promote ideological and political education, referring to the combination of traditional classroom teaching (the first classroom) and extracurricular teaching (the second classroom). The first classroom, as the main platform for ideological and political education, can fully utilize the main channel role of Marxist ideological and political education courses, integrating traditional Confucian culture into the teaching content in a targeted manner. Specific measures include introducing Confucian classics such as "The Analects" and "Mencius" into the ideological and political theory courses, systematically explaining the core concepts of Confucian ethical and moral views, and enhancing students' cultural identity and moral cultivation. The second classroom can host a variety of traditional Confucian cultural activities, such as special lectures on Confucian culture, the establishment of Confucian study groups, and recitation competitions of Confucian classics, to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for traditional culture. This dual-classroom model not only helps deepen theoretical teaching but also enhances students' participation and sense of identity in ideological and political education through practical activities, thereby improving the effectiveness and appeal of ideological and political education.

4.2 Creating a Positive Educational Environment in Colleges

Creating a positive educational environment in colleges has an important impact on students' character formation. Pre-Qin

Confucianism long recognized the importance of the environment for learners. Confucius emphasized the importance of a benevolent environment in "The Analects," and the story of Mencius' mother moving three times to find a suitable environment for her son's education has become a well-known anecdote. Xunzi also pointed out that "a plant growing among hemp becomes straight without being supported; white sand mixed with black mud becomes black." These viewpoints illustrate the significant influence of the environment on individual moral cultivation from different perspectives.

First, colleges should focus on creating a strong Confucian cultural atmosphere on campus. They can set up displays of Confucian classic quotes in public areas, host lectures and exhibitions on Confucian culture, and establish statues of Confucian sages such as Confucius and Mencius on campus, creating special areas for Confucian culture. These measures can not only enhance students' identification with Confucian culture but also improve their moral cultivation. Second, the construction of material culture should be strengthened. The material conditions of the campus environment directly affect students' learning and living. Colleges should invest in improving teaching facilities and living conditions, providing a good learning environment and comfortable living environment. For example, constructing well-equipped libraries, modern laboratories, and comfortable dormitories to create an environment conducive to the overall development of students. Third, colleges should focus on improving the moral education level of teachers through regular training and further education to enhance their ideological and political literacy and moral education capabilities. For instance, organizing teachers to participate in special training on Confucian culture to understand its essence and incorporate it into their teaching practices.

For example, organizing teachers to participate in special training on Confucian culture to understand its essence and incorporate it into their teaching practices. Additionally, establishing moral education awards to recognize teachers who excel in moral education can motivate teachers to focus on moral education in their daily teaching. "The educational environment in colleges is a significant institutional outcome of the school's values. To optimize the moral education environment, colleges themselves have a lot of work to do."

4.3 Emphasizing Online Platforms for Ideological and Political Education in Colleges

Since Confucius proposed the teaching principle of "teaching students according to their aptitude," this concept has been widely adopted by educators throughout history and is extensively applied in modern education. Confucius' teaching methods emphasize selecting different teaching strategies based on each student's uniqueness, focusing on personalized education. On this basis, Mencius proposed the principle of "teaching in multiple ways." He stated in "Mencius • Gongsun Chou II": "There are many ways of teaching. What I reject is teaching that does not teach." Mencius believed that there are various ways to instruct people, preferring non-verbal teaching methods.

In today's era of prevalent online media, college students use the internet daily to obtain information. The internet significantly influences students' thoughts, morality, and values. Colleges can establish online platforms for ideological and political education by setting up specialized websites, where ideological and political educators edit content centered

around themes of ideological and political education in colleges. By comprehensively understanding students' thoughts from multiple angles, these platforms can conduct education on ideals, beliefs, and the core socialist values, promoting the excellent traditional Chinese culture and improving students' comprehensive qualities. Colleges can also use online platforms to promote Confucian culture,

leveraging the convenience and speed of online media to innovate the form and content of traditional ideological and political courses. This facilitates the organic combination of online ideological and political work with classroom teaching, encouraging college students to deeply study and understand traditional Confucian culture.

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