

The Modern Value of Confucius “Principle ‘Instruction Knows No Class Distinction’”

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Abstract. Current issues such as uneven resource allocation among regions, between urban and rural areas, and among people continue to plague our education. Even though developing a lifelong education system is one of the big national strategies. Thus, it should be worth emphasizing that traditional educational thought still has its own influence on China’s current issues. discuss on instruction knowledge class distinctions within present day’s education developments.” Instruction knows no class distinction.” is a significant subject for reviewing this concept and exploring the deep meanings that exist throughout the history, investigating how such practices are impacting current day’s education gap, fostering equal distribution of education resources, and establishing lifelong education and learning. The idea presented in this article mainly adopts the library literature. Through research methods such as revising the original classical literature related to “Instruction knows no class distinction,” and revisiting relevant research outcomes from academia about the above-mentioned idea; following the present status of modern society in terms of education’s development, using cases to judge the practical significance of concepts. The main principle core of the idea of “Instruction knows no class distinction” including equal education and all-round education being attainable for everyone, and are the main element in reflecting the rights to education, resource allocation for disadvantaged groups and ensuring and promoting educational justice. It can be concluded that, in its universality and logic “Instruction knows no class distinction” stands out across time, providing ideological guidance for today’s educational equities and lifelong educations.

Keywords: The Analects of Confucius; Instruction knows no class distinction; Educational equity; Equal allocation of educational resources.

1. Introduction

This article discusses how urgent people feel about achieving equitable education access for all citizens today. Nowadays, people need widespread access to education to meet the demands of society. In Confucius’ view that “instruction knows no class distinction” some suitable ways or means can be sought. And here this paper attempts to go further than previous scholars did about Confucius’ “instruction knows no class distinction”. Writing on “instruction knows no class distinction.” Today, one needs to connect the inheritance of its traditional idea with modern educational theories and teaching practices; redefine its practical significance in current social context; give Chinese specificity to advance modern education’s equity, as well as offer an angle for promoting current modern education reforms, like balancing educational resources between underdeveloped areas and well-developed cities.

This research focuses deeply on researching and explaining about the origin of “instruction knows no class distinction,” its present situation and significance, the challenges it will face and some probable solutions to it. In this paper, literature reviews were employed to look for all kinds of related documents and evidences, combined with the dominant ideas of education in western countries, combined with research results regarding modernization of traditional education. It can also illustrate national ideas in modern society. It can analyze the meaning of “instruction knows no class distinction” an idea stated in many texts, including parts of the Analects of Confucius, which provides the theoretical basis for the subsequent research in this field. Then, it applies historical comparative analysis to study the social environment when these ideas were born compare the political and economic systems and social development status with those of similar periods such as ancient China

and Athens of ancient Greece, highlighting the similarities and differences. By using this method, an explicit historical line could be formed and the crossed-era historical significance was shown, and what's more, the writer had used the way of case study. That means he closely linked up with the reality of current society. From various regions of our country's action for the guarantee of the access to education for people from all classes, and all the studies done to make sure all people get opportunity to have access to proper quality education, it can be seen that the idea of "instruction knows no class distinction" is very feasible. Furthermore, this way enables people to comprehend the essential connotation of "instruction knows no class distinction" better, thus conveying a strong message to all the other works.

The aim of this study is to explore the contemporary practicability of the educational equality and education-for-the-people principles contained within the guideline of "instruction knows no class distinction", and to examine the practice value of applying it to breaking down education inequality, increasing equalization of educational resources, and making full use of modern technology to meet present needs. Add on another layer of thinking based on this: Consider the means to adapt present reality and reshape traditional ideas. Then, analyze what constitutes the necessary components for modernizing the meaning of "instruction knows no class distinction", so that it can meet the needs of modern society, demonstrate the current value in society, and find out what China would possibly come across if trying to modernize the implementation of the principle of "instruction knows no class distinction of background".

2. The Origin and Core Connotation of the Idea of "Instruction Knows No Class Distinction"

2.1. Tracing the Origins of Thought

"Instruction knows no class distinction" originated during the Spring and Autumn period in China, a time of significant social transformation. Before the Spring and Autumn period, educational resources were monopolized by the aristocratic class. "Learning in government schools" was a social characteristic of the time, and the children of ordinary commoners had almost no opportunities to receive an education. With the development of the times, the invention and popularization of the "iron plow and ox-drawn cultivation" raised agricultural production greatly, which replaced the well-field system that was once the main form. The feudal land ownership gradually came into being, with the landlord-noble class beginning to develop; at the same time, the civilians became more and more eager for the demand for education. Therefore, education that spreads widely in society becomes the inevitable need of this era. Confucius proposed the educational principle of "instruction knows no class distinction" and actively endeavored to put this principle into practice [1]. As Bi W stated in the article "Enlightenment of Confucius' Thought of People Oriented on Modern Education", he believes that Confucius, as a pioneer of private education, broke the ancient aristocracy's monopoly on education and promoted the popularization of education among common people [2].

In earlier times the word "Lei (a clan group)" meant "category," which came to refer to concepts such as the state's organizational rank, status, wealth, and poverty [3]; therefore, when one interprets "instruction knows no class," its meaning is equal education opportunity, equal chance for receiving an education, accepting disciples irrespective of one's national origin social status or ethnicity do not play a major role as Confucius accepted students of different social and family backgrounds [4]. This paved way for the introduction of education to the common people and this educational activity carried out by Confucius stands as one of his significant achievement towards the expansion of education in ancient China. "instruction knows no class distinction" a guiding principle for pedagogy and a value for education. The slogan of Confucius "instruction knows no class distinction" became a central idea of traditional Chinese educational thought that is still relevant until now and it has greatly influenced today's Chinese educational thought and system.

2.2. Tracing the Origins of Thought

This work first collected many related materials about the research results before doing certain optimization integration. In the article “A Critical Reflection on Confucius’ Educational Thought of ‘Teaching Without Discrimination’ and Its Implications for Higher Education Practice,” Li Tao interprets the meaning of “instruction knows no class distinction” from the following three perspectives: first, two meanings; second, status of discrimination; third, standpoint of guidance. Educational equity, restorative education, and exegesis criticism. It is also explained that “instruction knows no class distinction” does not represent the idea that every child should have an indiscriminate education, but rather means the dialectical unity of teaching everyone who wishes to learn while still acknowledging that instruction needs to be properly tailored and conducted based on the particular students. This paper aims to transcend the limitations of a single dimension, broaden the scope of fairness, and achieve an organic integration of theory and practice. However, regarding the differentiated application “instruction knows no class distinction” across various disciplines and levels in higher education, the article contains limited discussion [5]. In the article “Confucius’ Educational Thought and Its Implications for Contemporary Special Education”. Ding Yong examines the core connotations and contemporary value the concepts of “instruction knows no class distinction”, “teaching according to individual ability”, and “great harmony” have been alluded to. It is commonly known that special education’s principle centers around instruction according to an individual’s ability and providing individualized education program to meet learners’ needs. Nonetheless, this research paper points out that special education has never been the topic of focused inquiry till now [6]. Therefore, the research focuses on modern China as a whole, using the “China Education Statistics Yearbook” for reference. From “The Analects” and other literary sources, the study draws the following conclusions about core content.

2.2.1. The universality of educational subjects

The root meaning of “instruction knows no class distinction” is “without discrimination.” And “Education should be available to all without distinction” emphasizes fairness in the educational procedure, meaning that teachers must not use different, prejudiced lenses toward different students because of their background. While giving instruction to different students, teachers should treat every one fairly. It is also necessary to adjust the way we teach based on individual student differences [4], reflecting the underlying ideal of equal opportunity that those in power at the time believed should exist. Highlighting that education is a right for everyone, not just a perk for nobles or the privileged few, was considered progressive back then and still feels that way today.

2.2.2. Equality of educational opportunities

The concept of “education for all classes” emphasises that teaching content and resources should be universally accessible, ensuring that students in all regions have equal access; educational authorities should not hinder the fair access to quality educational resources for reasons such as geographic location. Besides, regardless of whether the social or economic backgrounds of students vary greatly, teachers need to treat every single student fairly. Or expresses the idea of Confucius “whenever a student offers even the modest gift of a bundle of dried meat, I have never declined to teach them” [7]; In modern society, equal access to education resources and equal access to admission opportunities belong to two sides of the same coin, reflecting the respect of people for individual development rights and an important embodiment of educational equity.

2.2.3. The inclusiveness of educational philosophy

The saying “Instruction knows no class distinction” does not mean the treating all people in the same way and ignoring the fact that individuals are different; instead, it gives more importance to the concept of “teaching students based on their capabilities.” Confucius advised Gongxi Hua differently when advising Zhong You and Ran Qiu with their individual levels of bravery shown [1]. Therefore, during the course of teaching, Confucius used the principles of “instruction knows no class distinction” combined with “teaching people based on their aptitude”. This means that pursuing “instruction

knows no class distinction” does not aim for an absolutely uniform standard of education, but rather it aims for an inclusive educational philosophy that acknowledges and caters to the individual differences among the students so as to fully promote the development of the students as a whole.

3. The Modern Value of “Instruction Knows No Class Distinction” and the Practical Challenges of Implementation

3.1. Educational Equity

Education is a major driving force behind social mobility and various dynasties in history have worked on this continuously. Since the times of the Sui and Tang Dynasties the method of Imperial examinations has been established to enable the members from the underprivileged families to have a chance to take charge of their own destinies. In the Song Dynasty the Mifeng and Suoyuan examination methods were introduced, making the imperial examination more fair. In spite of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the nation has employed the College Entrance Examination to sift through potential workers with meritocracy. Even though following the reform and opening-up, increasing inequality of wealth in the ranks of each and every class within society and stratum is exaggerated, education still serves as an essential ladder of vertical social mobility. The “instruction knows no class distinction” that “instruction knows no class distinction” pursues is actually the means to break through the class rigidity, now in today’s society more and more people will find it is getting more expensive to let their kids get an education.

More and more, raising and educating the child means to show off the parents’ ability and resources. Educational compensation system as what the instruction knows no class distinction think go about these problems. The “Research on the Pathways for the Equitable Development of Compulsory Education in China in the New Era” distinction can ensure educational chances for disadvantaged groups and can enhance their position through education, as discussed in the article “Research on the Pathways for the Equitable Development of Compulsory Education in China in the New Era.” It is recommended in the article that all citizens should receive equal educational opportunities at equal cost and be aware that they should receive compulsory education. Legal provisions should be made to ensure that school-aged children have equal access to both the infrastructure and elements of education [8].

The allocation of educational resources is uneven across cities and regions and within schools, which makes it harder for the disadvantaged people to receive education, increasing the danger that they will end up at the bottom. The Huaping Girls’ High School opened its doors for the first time in 2008, founded by Zhang Guimei as China’s very first tuition-free high school exclusively for girls. It enrolls girls who come from impoverished mountainous regions and ethnic families. Enabling students to leave the mountains to pursue dreams and advance their futures. It transformed young girls into pioneers leaving home so that they would not be limited by mountain rigidity and their predestined fate of marrying young or working outside the home. It is a famous case in educationally impoverished areas, embodying the doctrine of “instruction knows no class distinction.”

It also stands for the complicated educational issues concerning fairness and inequity prevailing in the Chinese context today. The typically of Huaping Girls’ High School lies in its accurate embodiment of “instruction knows no class distinction” and it breaks through in practice. As an educational institution, it establishes a precious reference case of assisting disadvantaged groups in underdeveloped regions to improve their educational conditions. It not only transcends the dual obstacles of class and gender but also leads by example in implementing this educational principle. Adhering to “non-categorization” it is a typical example of education poverty relief that provides a role model for other remote areas and narrows regional differences, thereby satisfying demands for equal education.

Nevertheless, there are still some deficiencies such as adopting a model oriented by individuals. When the goal of the school is fulfilled, this practice should come to end. Society only recognizes Principal

Zhang Guimei’s good works but not those of others working on the front line. The scale of Huaping Girl’s High School is too small to affect the current social landscape fundamentally. Most importantly, the basic function of a school that causes alarm is merely preparing students to go to university, which reflects a tendency towards ignoring all else and overemphasis on one thing - preparations for examinations. Therefore, while teaching students, teachers should put students first and do everything possible to help them meet their needs instead of following the now-outdated “student-centered” pedagogy. Regrettably, such schools like Huaping Girl’s High School are hard to find in most corners of China and in rural areas most especially.

3.2. Educational Balance

The balance of educational resources embodies the concept of educational equity and serves as the primary goal of modern education; in current Chinese society, imbalances in educational resources are significant and disturbingly obvious. Higher quality and more favorable teaching resources can be found mostly in relatively developed areas and top-tier schools. The differences in college admission requirements across provinces are the most obvious, which reflects the uneven distribution of resources between regions; “education without discrimination” emphasises the universality of education; it is necessary to allocate funds and resources as well as dispatch excellent teachers so that education resources flow toward remote areas, ordinary schools, vulnerable groups, and narrow down the disparity of resources among regions.

The problem that unequal distribution of educational resources still cannot be solved in modern China now is obvious. Urban areas enjoy more favorable conditions than those from the countryside when compared: less educational funds in rural regions, weaker educational staff, worse physical conditions, and lacking attractiveness for new people. Cities and rural districts enjoy different standards in terms of their respective quantities of quality resources. Taking Hunan Province as an example: The four prestigious schools in Changsha(The first high school of Changsha. Changsha Changjun High School, Yali High School, and The high school attached to the Hunan normal university)consistently achieve a first-tier university admission rate of over 95%. A large number of parents and students are flocking to cities with well-developed educational resources. Therefore, in recent years, Hunan Province has also made some changes regarding educational reform. It is prohibited for the four major schools in Changsha to recruit students from prefecture-level city schools. Moreover, it encourages high-quality teachers to teach in rural areas to help bridge the gap in educational resources between different regions.

Table 1. Comparison of educational resources across different regions (a)

Region	Number of schools (ten thousand)	Proportion	Number of students (ten thousand)
East	18.76	37.6%	11856.32
Central	15.63	31.4%	9245.67
West	15.44	31.0%	7998.51

Table 2. Comparison of educational resources across different regions (b)

Educational stage	City	County and town	countryside
Higher Education	2256 (73.4%)	789 (25.7%)	29 (0.9%)
General high school	5832 (38.0%)	7648 (49.6%)	1900 (12.4%)
junior high school	12600 (24.1%)	25700 (49.1%)	14000 (26.8%)
Elementary school	39700 (27.7%)	83800 (58.4%)	20000 (13.9%)

The comparison drawn from Table 1 and Table 2 indicates a clear disparity in education between different regions of our country's eastern and western provinces and between cities and villages [9]. High quality and balanced development can only be realized by rationalizing resources allocation, improving systems and reinforcing supervisions so that compulsory education attains a higher quality level and a more equitable status. To better secure the equitable distribution of educational resources, the relevant mechanism for education support and equal opportunity should be improved, and resource allocation to those areas short of education resources, such as Xinjiang and Tibet, should be enhanced so as to raise the living allowances for teachers working there, which will enable children in less developed regions to study even if they live far away from their school. While users have no trouble gaining access to quality content online, restrictions and lack of resources can narrow down this list greatly. China, however, cannot take away resources from the less equipped areas such as the west. And, according to Huang Bin, in order to really make progress, China needs to shift focus from basic educational equity to high-quality educational equity, where realizing the “three transformations”- the opportunities are sufficient instead of only guaranteed; the resources are provided properly instead of uniformly distributed; and the supporting measures go from the money support to empowering students is important [10].

3.3. Resource Utilization

Digital teaching technology allows education to reach more people, and “instruction knows no class distinction” is reborn through digital teaching. Online education platforms can carry top-notch teaching resources across spatial and temporal boundaries so as to send high-quality teaching resources to students at even more distant locations. As Ou Yang S mentioned: a work “Cultivate Innovate Personnel and Promote the Renaissance of Science and Technology with Chinese Education Wisdom”: it should not only satisfy today's higher education requirement (to cultivate innovators and meet the technological revolution), transform traditional education wisdom into specific ways to drive educational reform. It can be seen that “a balance of arts and sciences” corresponds [11]. Second, providing a full range of philosophical, literary, and scientific courses together with “unity of knowledge and action” is intended to strengthen cooperation between universities and industries, to enhance linkages between learning and applying, and to apply digital technology for daily instruction. However, there still exists a large disparity between the extent of applications of digital technologies among primary-secondary schools, and currently China's educational resources have experienced deficiencies and negative aspects in some remote regions, even compared to other relatively more developed regions, with lower levels of praxis. In certain regions, the network infrastructure may be insufficiently developed due to geographical limitations and other circumstances, various specific groups might have insufficient abilities and skills related to digital understanding, and economic backwardness limits the development of digital equipment for those schools.

To achieve modern digital education, local governments should allocate special funds, closely monitor how they're used, increase the local education budget, and get a bunch of digital teaching tools [12]. In today's internet-based society, the relevant authorities must pay greater attention to education in remote areas and convince more people to know more about the “Huaping Girls' High School”. More money could also be donated to it. In addition, relevant departments should keep giving due priority to improving education equity for disadvantaged groups such as poor people and disabled children [8].

4. Methods for Implementing the Modern Value of “Instruction Knows No Class Distinction”

4.1. Theoretical Level

Theory is the cornerstone of reality. This article considers the ways to strengthen ideological transformation: first, through the promotion in schools and on the internet, to advocate the modern concept of “instruction knows no class distinction,” to abandon the notion of “class-based education,” and to return education to its original purpose; secondly, strengthen teacher training, enhance teachers’ professional ethics, raise teachers’ intensity towards management as well as fairness, promote an atmosphere welcoming universal participation from social force all around, so as to achieve a fair education; as Ding Yong mentioned, we must learn from the principles and policies of Big Village, increase mobilization over shared values and integration among people involved in special needs school education. The current practices in both special education sector and ordinary school sectors can work toward promoting people’s positive attitude and behavior change in accepting views on cultivating both societal and individualism.

4.2. Practical Level

Policies can ensure that “instruction knows no class distinction” for all students. And as noted by Tang Yin, some problems still need to be fixed before the same quality of preschool education can be offered both in cities and in villages, like unequal resource distribution [13]. Furthermore, there is too little resources reserved for early childhood education in rural areas compared to urban ones. In the light of the above, governments at various levels need to provide more support for early childhood educational development. First, promote appropriate aid flows to the remote areas and construct a system which can supervise funds properly. Second, perfect the protecting system of the special groups and maintain the educational normative standards with whole creating secondly government departments need to create a mechanism of transferring teachers, spreading teaching resources evenly and providing allowances for the mobile teachers to enhance the teaching capability in remote areas, also retain good teachers in those areas. Last, erect the National Digital Teaching Platform, transforming high quality resources into digital form, so that students from remote regions have the opportunity of accessing quality resources anytime and anywhere.

5. Conclusion

This research suggests that “instruction knows no class distinction” is a significant part of the outstanding traditional culture in China, and its essence includes equal education recipients, equal distribution of educational resources, and equal educational opportunities. Its compatibility is quite high with the principles promoted in today’s society. For example, the idea that education should offer opportunities to people regardless of their social standing, that education is an investment for life, and that classroom instruction and teacher training should also use the power of information technology to modernize is an idea much ahead of the time that looks beyond the present. Modernity of ideas for innovation and reform in education is still at its starting point, with much room for development. The conclusion of this paper, however, posits that even though currently the realization of the philosophy that “instruction knows no class distinction” has not been entirely realized, in contemporary times and in future university education as well as school teacher-teaching, its concrete and effective operation will increasingly move forward and flourish. This study is highly valuable for future research on incorporating traditional culture into modern education. It serves as a crucial guide for exploring how to modernize traditional cultural education in practice, build educational equity in modern society, and create a systematic approach to combining lifelong learning with traditional culture.

However, this article is mainly based on existing literature and data released by relevant official departments as references, and research is conducted on this basis. Although it is somewhat connected to real life, it still does not fully reflect the most realistic situations in the discussion and research. To

a certain extent, there is a possibility of being merely theoretical. It mainly only takes China's national conditions into account and has not studied the situations in other countries.

In the future, we should further explore. This article needs to conduct research by combining the situations in China and other countries. There needs to be more understanding extracted from the essence of "instruction knows no class distinction", and from the views of other educators from throughout Chinese history as they apply to present day and how to best impart this philosophy in society. Likewise, there should also be an extensive exploration into how to properly apply instruction-knows-no-class-distinction ideas into a situation where every person has access to information-based and digitized teaching methods, differentiated application of these methods for varying social strata, and development into steady progression models to cater towards continuous life-long learning.

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