



## THE RECEPTION OF EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT OF CONFUCIUS (CHINA) THROUGH THE STUDY OF THE ANALECTS IN VIETNAM

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### **Abstract:**

Confucius (551- 479 BC) was a great thinker not only of China but of all mankind. He was honored as the "Master of the Universe" representing "eternal teacher". His teachings and conversation process with teachers and students have been collected and edited by students into the Analects, one of the Confucian classics widely used in building feudal state governments in China and Vietnam. In recent years, the Party and State of Vietnam have implemented many undertakings and policies aimed at building, developing and renovating education and training. Along with access to knowledge, and advanced and modern lessons from the West, Confucius's educational thought continues to be recognized and properly appreciated. Our research paper aims to show the application and reception of Confucius' educational ideas in current Vietnamese educational practice.

**Keywords:** reception, educational thought, the analects, Confucius, education in Vietnam

### **1. Statement of the problem**

Modern Vietnamese education is developing and moving in the direction of following the positive nucleus, making progress from the tradition, and at the same time having regular innovation, in order to limit and overcome the mistakes of the previous education system. Education in Vietnam is being promoted strongly, and effectively and the quality of education is increasingly improved. One of the ideas that have a great influence on Vietnamese education is Confucius's educational thought, which is specifically expressed in the Analects. Before going to find out the reception of the educational thought of the revered master, we conduct an overview survey of the infiltration process of Confucianism into Vietnam, specifically the influence of Confucianism on the Vietnamese education system in the past and present.

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## 2. Research content

### 2.1. The influence of Confucianism on Vietnam

The history of Vietnam has recorded the invasion of China into Vietnam. In 179 BC, Trieu Da invaded Au Lac and some areas in the south, becoming the king of Nam Viet. However, at that time, Trieu Da did not implement a strict policy of assimilation but mainly lived with the customs of the Bach Viet people, considering themselves as Bach Viet people. It was not until Emperor Wu of Han expanded his territory on a large scale that Nam Viet was officially assimilated by the Chinese. However, in the historical and social context at that time, although Confucianism had become a popular philosophy of the Chinese people, it had not really been transmitted to Vietnam, the new cultural suppression was in its infancy. Vietnamese people still keep their way of life, customs and habits. After the failure of the Hai Ba Trung uprising in the 40s AD, Ma Vien carried out a cultural reform, promoting cultural assimilation to Nam Viet. In the process of cultural assimilation, Confucianism was officially introduced into Vietnam, history books clearly state that the first person to preach Confucianism was Si Niep. However, at the present time, Confucianism has not yet become an all-powerful and hegemonic philosophical system in Vietnam because of the relatively limited resources and books of mainstream Confucianism and the class of Confucians know little Chinese. At the same time Confucianism was introduced to Vietnam, there was also the spread of other ideological winds such as Buddhism and Taoism. Buddhism with the view of compassion, kindness and goodwill, has many similarities with Vietnamese culture, so it quickly dominates, overwhelms other ideas and is widely welcomed in the community. In addition, the Vietnamese people's lifestyle of worshipping grandparents, ancestors, and fertility beliefs is in harmony with Chinese Taoism, so people who follow Taoist views also account for a large number. At this time, in Vietnamese society, the three religions coexist, namely Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Confucianism has not really ascended the throne and occupied a unique position in this period. After the victory of Ngo Quyen against the Southern Han army in 938, Vietnam got rid of China's nearly 10 centuries of slavery and started building an autonomous feudal state. By the Ly Dynasty (XI - XIII centuries), the ruling class realized the preeminent role of Confucianism in building the governance apparatus of the country, so Confucianism flourished. The feudal state used Confucian classics to take exams, select talents, and govern the country. The Le Dynasty (XV - XVI centuries) was the period of the peak development of Confucianism. It occupies a unique position and society forms a class of Confucian intellectuals called feudal intellectuals. Knowledge of Confucian classics and books to select talents in this period cannot fail to mention the Analects, the most important book of the Four Books. Based on historical data, we found that, during the process of forming and building an autonomous feudal state in Vietnam from the 11th century to the first half of the 19th century, the ruling class chose Confucian ideals as an orthodox philosophy in planning and setting up the education system - admission and selection of talents. Therefore, the influence of Confucian thought, especially the educational

perspective in Confucius' Analects, on the organization and management of Vietnamese society in the feudal period is extremely important. The system and content of educational thought in the Analects of Confucius clearly show the principle of "*learning coupled with practice, education combined with productive labor, theory associated with practice*" factors that are top priority in teaching and learning practice in Vietnam today. So, who is Confucius? How is the Analects related to Confucius and how does Confucius' educational thought in Analects affect Vietnamese society? These issues will be of interest and research.

## **2.2. Introduction to Confucius and the Analects**

Confucius (551-479 BC), named Qiu, self-named Trong Ni, was born in Xuong Binh village, Qu Fu district, now in Phu Yanzhou, Shandong province, China. Confucius' ancestors were Song people who moved to Lu. Confucius was 3 years old when his father died, he was a smart man, living in the Spring and Autumn Warring States period. The war was constant, the king was lavish, debauched, unruly, looting raged, and the people were miserable. As a dreamer of building the country, Confucius advocated educating the people, making the country get rid of immorality, Confucius used the doctrine of promoting the virtues of humanity, the theory of name and destiny to clearly establish order in the world, he traveled to many countries to spread his views. But in the chaotic and dark social situation, people treated each other with war, looting, an ungodly society like that time, the ideology system had an idealized color like the reign of King Yao, Confucius's discipline is not respected. At the age of 35, according to the noble mind and spirit of the gentleman, he returned to his hometown to start a teaching career. Students from all over the world have come to study him, they all respect and admire him. He had more than 3,000 students, including 72 good ones. Confucius spent 4 years working as a mandarin of the state of Lu. But the king of Lu at that time was a prostitute, passionate about drinking, and did not care about politics, so Confucius went back to his hometown, then devoted himself fully to teaching, preaching his ideals to his students. At the same time, he also researched and revised previous books and wrote the book Spring and Autumn.

The Analects is not a book written by Confucius, but in the process of teaching and lecturing in his hometown, Confucius's disciples recorded his teachings along with the dialogues between the teacher and the students. The Analects is a book of great value to help us understand Confucius's system of thought, especially in terms of education. The core of Confucius' thought is the word "Humanity" which is closely linked with ethics. According to Confucius, when people have ethics, when they want to stand firm in life, they must help others to stand firm in life. Everything can be thought of from oneself to others, it can be said that it is the way to be ethical: 子貢曰：如有博施於民而能濟眾，何如？可謂仁乎？子曰：何事於仁！必也聖乎！堯舜其猶病諸！夫仁者，己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人。能近取譬，可謂仁之方也已。

Humanity according to Confucius is also 己所不欲勿施於人. In order to accomplish the Humanity, Confucius asked everyone to have rules which are a system

of human conduct manners, expressing ethical norms to perform benevolence. The educational thought of Confucius at that time was quite advanced, with the teaching of a chaotic social system, while the Master's policy was reformism, teaching people according to politeness. The core values of Confucius' thought were completely inconsistent with the ruling class at that time. Therefore, his Confucian philosophical thought was not used and respected. However, today's academic circles, when analyzing and evaluating Confucius' thought, people have noticed its positive kernels. The education system of Vietnam has also successfully applied the positive and progressive thought nucleus of Confucius. At all levels of education from primary to high school today, there are signs quoting Confucius' sayings in the Analects such as: study manners first and then learn to read and write, be deferential to the teacher and respect their morals.

### **2.3. The reception of educational thought in The Analects of Confucius in Vietnam**

One of the leading educational advances in Confucius' Analects is in terms of educational objects. Considering the social era at that time, when the objects of education were still limited, only the children of mandarins and aristocrats could go to school, Confucius' view was completely different. He was one of the first teachers who opened a private school at home to teach and recruit all kinds of people from society. Confucius openly recruited students. Thus, even in his own era, Confucius made great progress. When most schools were opened by the court to accept the children of mandarins, while Confucius advocated popular education. This is a remarkable step in the contemporary educational perspective. That idea of equality in education represents remarkable progress, except that the biggest limitation in Confucius' thought is that it does not accept women. Confucius's restriction in not accepting women to school due to objective reasons of the times. In view of contemporary society, when it is transitioning from matriarchy to patriarchy, when men are on the verge of showing their bravery and masculinity, women are only considered as keepers of the fire. Their noble duty and responsibility are to give birth to children, fulfill the role of mother, wife, and normal female status. Except for the limitation stemming from the point of view of the times, the expansion of educational objects in Confucius' thought still needs to be recognized and appreciated. This view is still applied in Vietnamese society today, that is, all educational institutions and schools create favorable conditions for all citizens to go to school, implement charity programs, helping poor children overcome difficulties, encourage the learning spirit in children with difficult family circumstances, and children in remote areas. The school always encourages and mobilizes students to have the energy to study and complete the universal education program. Thus, the educational views of Confucius, although 25 centuries old today, are not outdated and are still completely adapted to the trend of modern education. The humanistic meaning of Confucius' point of view on education is still widely spread and practiced in educational programs in many countries. Expanding the teaching objects also shows the heart, and the benevolent nature of the teacher. The teacher does not do material things, does not require students to have high rituals, and

comes from a powerful family. Confucius' point of view is also a profound lesson for the generation of Vietnamese teachers in particular and the teaching profession in the world in general, about the requirement of the teacher's wholeheartedness and talent, a sense of responsibility in teaching and learning.

The objects of Confucius's teaching also show in his progress when he classified students in the teaching process, ensuring that the teaching is suitable for each object. However, he could not escape the negative side under the thinking prism of that time, it was educating the gentleman to manage society and at the same time educating the petty people so that they could obey orders and serve society. Confucius divided his students into two classes: wise and stupid. The wise class was taught for high things, with the role of social organizers and managers, while the stupid class taught them to do the right thing, in accordance with the contemporary feudal social system. At the same time, Confucius also divided educational content into four aspects: Ethic subject included Nhan Uyen, Mau Tu - Khien, Nhiem Ba Nguu, Trong Cung; Language subject included Te Nga and Tu Cong; Political subject included Nhiem Huu, Quy Lo; Literature subject included Tu Du and Tu Ha. 德行：顏淵、閔子騫、冉伯牛、仲弓言語：宰我、子貢政事：冉有、李路文；學：子游、子夏. Although Confucius was not fully aware of the division of disciplines to teach, in fact he also had a division of knowledge in the teaching process, this is also one of the most appreciated positive ideas. Acquiring this point of view in Vietnam is the division of classes in the general education system, including classes chosen according to learners' ability such as choosing literature, math, and arts..., followed by the division of classes. The committee includes the social sciences, natural sciences. The division of students into classes through more carefully selected examinations, in order to promote their abilities, strengths, fortitudes, interests and hobbies, soon orienting future careers for learners. The point of view of the modern educational system is not without the acquisition of traditional values in Confucius' educational thought, but on the contrary, it is the critical and selective acquisition of the quintessence in his educational ideological system to apply appropriately and effectively.

The next positive point in Confucius's educational method is the emphasis between learning theory and practice (學而時習之，不亦說乎？有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎？人不知而不慍，不亦君子乎) Confucius said, "A good person who teaches the people for seven years can use the people to fight", "to send the uneducated people out to fight the enemy, that is, to abandon the people". Stemming from the point of view of the people and caring for the lives of the people, Confucius always taught his students to respect people, and to use knowledge to apply it to real life. For Confucius, learning is not only memorizing the classics and theories, but also the application in human behavior. This is an effective teaching method, creating a friendly learning environment, creating joy in learning for learners and helping learners promote their active roles. Nowadays, this method is very important in modern teaching. This shows that the values of Confucius' educational method are undeniable. This view continued to be inherited by the Party and State of Vietnam. The Document of the X Congress affirmed expanding the scale, at the same time focusing on improving the quality and effectiveness of education, linking learning with

practice, and talent with ethics. Confucius always requires students to develop their thinking ability, eager to learn, and appreciate between review, study and thinking. In particular, Confucius always encourages the spirit of inquiry and creativity, and the study method shows the students' dialectical reasoning. He once said that if his students weren't eager to learn, he wouldn't teach. He pointed out an angle without knowing how to deduce for the other three angles, he shouldn't teach anymore "*who does not try to find, I don't just draw. Who does not reveal his thoughts, I will not enlighten. Whoever I teach does not know or I do not teach*" (子曰：不憤不啟，不悱不發。舉一隅不以三隅反，則不復也). Up to now, in the current situation of the education system in Vietnam and other countries around the world, we have found that we still use this teaching method of Confucius, which is to give students a sense of self-discipline and creativity. The teacher no longer plays a one-way teaching role, but requires active cooperation by learners. 默而識之，學而不厭，誨人不倦，何有於我哉? The teacher plays the role of suggesting and orienting while the learners promote their independent and creative role to find a way to solve the situation, to be deeply aware of the problem. Confucius not only sets requirements for learners, but he also sets requirements for teachers. Teachers must always show their enthusiasm, love their teaching profession without getting bored, set an example for students to follow. Confucius attaches great importance to the principle of being an example, a father must set an example for his children, a teacher must set an example for his students, a husband must set an example for his wife, and a brother must set an example for his younger siblings. That is also the principle of the doctrine of legitimacy in the thought of Confucius. This method is still respected and widely applied in the Vietnamese education system. Schools often give examples of good people, good deeds, use the personality of sages to influence students, take the model of "gentleman" and "small person" to set an example for students to strive to follow a good model, avoid becoming bad people. Ho Chi Minh, the great and beloved leader of the Vietnamese nation once affirmed: "*A vital example is worth more than 100 propaganda speeches*".

Confucius always upholds uprightness. Confucius's study is to have benevolence which is the moral quality of a gentleman, it is necessary to have benevolence to teach and take care of the people's lives. 子曰：志於道，據於德，依於仁，游於藝. President Ho Chi Minh also absorbed this positive nucleus in Confucius' educational perspective to remind everyone: "For the benefit of ten years, one must plant trees. For the benefit of a hundred years, one must plant people". For the cause of Vietnamese education, which is still consistent according to the advantages of Confucius' educational thought, the issue of teaching and learning innovation has also shown the role of teachers and learners, which has many similarities with the educational views of Confucius. By appreciating the role of the teacher, the word "heart" and "talent" always go hand in hand, so today Vietnamese teachers regularly participate in professional training classes to improve their knowledge and teaching methods. At the same time, the school conducts activities to collect students' teacher evaluation sheets. The evaluation form is one of the important survey information channels to assess the quality of education, the capacity of teachers to make appropriate adjustments and supplements to meet the requirements of

education. Vietnam in the trend of international integration. Thus, in essence, the educational content of Confucius, although more than two thousand years ago today and in a country that is not China like Vietnam and many other countries in the world, the values and positive views in Confucius' educational thought continue to be recognized and appreciated. Confucius' educational thought has transcended time with a lasting vitality.

In addition to teachers and reading in books, everyday things are worth learning, students should uphold the spirit of seeking in those around them, in all walks of life in society, see their good to learn from, see their bad and weakness to correct themselves 子曰：三人行，必有我師焉：擇其善者而從之，其不善者 Confucius emphasized education and the learning process should take place anytime, anywhere because he saw the great importance and effect of education. The purpose of Confucius' educational thought is to establish a stable and orderly society, to build an ideal person to rule the country with morality and humanity. Confucius believes that education has the power to inspire people to return to the root of justice. Confucius' view of education is inevitably limited because the era he was living in was politically conservative. He mainly wanted to reconcile social conflicts, restore the Zhou Dynasty's rituals. He did not attach importance to manual labor, especially not accepting female students. When bound by historical conditions and class interests, his thought is inevitably conservative and backward, but besides the limitations of the times, the progressive kernels in the educational thought of Confucius are still the dominant echo. Because the Analects correctly reflected the development trend of history and surpassed the limits of caste and status, Confucius' thought contained a rational kernel with universal human values. That is the positive side and great progress in the philosophy of Confucius.

### 3. Conclusion

In comparison with Vietnamese education, when regularly implementing educational innovation programs, adjusting volume and teaching courses at all levels, Confucius' educational thought has always been thoroughly received and recognized. Confucius' educational thought to this day still exists in modern educational methods, which are expressed in positive factors that are consistent with Vietnamese educational practice. Education in Vietnam has always played the role of a leading national policy and a key task in national construction in order to train human resources in sufficient quantity and quality to successfully carry out the revolution and modernize the country. Considering the Confucian classics of education, especially from the educational theory in Confucius' Analects, from which to draw valuable lessons and how to apply them appropriately and effectively with the educational background. Vietnamese education is always a new research direction with scientific and practical significance.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author**

Dr. Nguyen Hong Linh is currently working at University of Education, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam. She is doing research on the reception of educational thought of Confucius (China) through the study of The Analects in Vietnam.

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