

A STUDY ON THE MECHANISMS OF EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE CULTURE IN THE CULTIVATION OF STUDENTS' MORAL CULTURE

Li Li

Belarus, Mogilev State University named after A. A. Kuleshov
elenasnopkova@mail.ru

Abstract. Traditional Chinese culture offers important moral resources for cultivating students' moral culture in higher education, but these resources do not produce educational effects automatically. This study uses a narrative review and theoretical synthesis approach to examine how values such as ren, yi, li, xin, self-cultivation and harmony can be transformed into educational processes. The analysis identifies four main mechanisms of educational transformation: cognitive interpretation, emotional identification, reflective self-cultivation and practical participation. The proposed framework links traditional cultural resources with students' value orientation, moral cognition, moral emotion, moral identity and moral practice.

Keywords: traditional Chinese culture; moral culture; educational transformation; higher education; self-cultivation.

Universities are expected to support students' moral formation as well as professional learning. In the Chinese educational tradition, learning is closely linked with conduct, self-cultivation and social responsibility. Moral resources such as ren, yi, li, xin, self-cultivation and harmony provide a cultural basis for developing students' responsibility, moral judgment and interpersonal respect. Peters notes that Chinese humanist education treats self-cultivation as a continuous process of moral development in relation to others [1]. The moral value of traditional Chinese culture does not automatically become students' moral culture. When traditional culture is taught mainly as historical knowledge or symbolic activity, it may not form stable moral cognition, emotional acceptance, moral identity or moral practice [2].

The purpose of this article is to identify the mechanisms through which traditional Chinese cultural resources are transformed into educational processes for cultivating students' moral culture. Chan et al. show that traditional Chinese moral values can support students' character development when embedded in structured educational programs [3]. Based on this logic, the article proposes a resource, mechanism and outcome framework linking cultural resources with cognitive interpretation, emotional identification, reflective self-cultivation and practical participation.

To examine this question, the study adopts a narrative review and theoretical synthesis approach. Relevant studies were selected from research on traditional Chinese culture, moral education, students' moral culture, self-cultivation and moral formation in higher education. The aim was not to count publications or assess all available studies, but to clarify the theoretical link between cultural resources, educational processes and students' moral development.

The analysis focused on three groups of content. The first group included traditional Chinese cultural resources related to moral education. The second group included educational mechanisms through which these resources may enter students' learning experience. The third group included components of students' moral culture, such as value orientation, moral cognition, moral emotion, moral identity and moral practice. These materials were compared and integrated to construct a resource, mechanism and outcome framework. Tsotsos et al. argue that literature based synthesis can be used not only to organize previous studies, but also to generate theoretical links and conceptual models [4].

The moral meaning of traditional Chinese culture is closely related to the way individuals understand themselves in relation to others. In this tradition, moral development is not limited to abstract judgment. It is also connected with daily conduct, respect, trust and the regulation of one's behavior in social life. Tan explains that Confucian moral thought pays attention to

respectful awareness toward others, which links inner attentiveness with moral conduct [5]. This view is useful for understanding traditional culture as a moral resource rather than as a fixed body of historical knowledge.

For the cultivation of students' moral culture, traditional Chinese culture can be understood through several core resources. Ren supports empathy and responsibility. Yi guides students in judging what is morally appropriate. Li connects respect with social norms and disciplined behavior. Xin strengthens honesty and trust in academic and interpersonal relations. Self-cultivation links reflection with personal moral improvement. Harmony supports cooperation and social responsibility.

Table 1.

Traditional Chinese cultural resources and their educational functions		
Cultural resource	Moral meaning	Educational function
Ren	Benevolence, humanity	Develops empathy and responsibility
Yi	Justice, moral appropriateness	Supports moral judgment
Li	Norms, respect, social order	Forms behavioral discipline
Xin	Honesty, trustworthiness	Strengthens integrity
Self-cultivation	Personal moral improvement	Links reflection with moral growth
Harmony	Relational balance	Supports cooperation and social responsibility

These resources do not directly form students' moral culture by themselves. Their educational value depends on whether they are interpreted, experienced and practiced in university life. For this reason, the next analytical step is to examine how cultural resources are transformed into educational mechanisms.

Traditional Chinese culture becomes educationally effective only when it is transformed from symbolic cultural heritage into structured learning experience, reflective self-cultivation and practical moral participation. Cognitive interpretation is the first mechanism in this process. Students need to understand moral concepts such as ren, yi, li and xin in relation to modern university life. These concepts should not be taught only as historical terms. They need to be connected with academic integrity, interpersonal respect, social responsibility and future professional conduct. Arthur argues that character education in universities should help students prepare for a life with purpose, not only for academic or professional achievement [6]. This view supports the need to interpret traditional moral values through concrete educational situations.

Emotional identification is the second mechanism. Students may understand a moral value at the cognitive level, but this does not mean that they accept it as part of their own value structure. Traditional cultural education should therefore create conditions in which students can feel the relevance of moral values to their own experience. Moral emotion is formed when students relate cultural meanings to real relations, conflicts and responsibilities. Without this step, traditional culture may remain external to students' personal development. Tian and Tang show that moral education affects college students not only through moral awareness and social responsibility, but also through emotional and psychological outcomes [7].

Reflective self-cultivation is the third mechanism and has special importance in the Chinese cultural tradition. Self-cultivation should not be reduced to a moral slogan. In educational practice, it means that students learn to examine their own motives, evaluate their behavior and correct their actions. This process changes traditional culture from an external norm into an internal form of moral agency. Practical participation is the fourth mechanism. Students' moral culture is formed through repeated action in courses, campus activities, volunteer service, academic integrity practice and collective life. For this reason, traditional Chinese culture should enter both classroom learning and the everyday moral environment of the university.

The previous analysis shows that traditional Chinese culture should be understood as a starting resource, not as a direct educational result. Moral ideas such as ren, yi, li, xin, self-cultivation and harmony provide the cultural content of moral education. Their educational effect

depends on whether these ideas are transformed into learning experiences that students can understand, accept and practice.

The proposed framework describes moral formation as a mediated process. Traditional Chinese culture provides moral resources, but these resources need educational mediation before they can influence students' values, cognition, emotions, identity and practice. The model does not treat these outcomes as separate results. They are connected parts of students' moral development (figure 1).

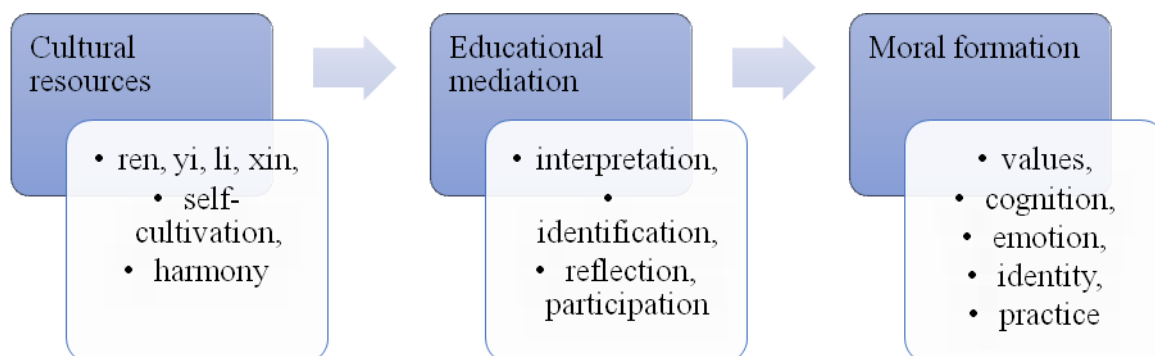


Figure 1. From traditional cultural resources to students' moral formation

The model also clarifies why practical participation is necessary. A student may understand the meaning of honesty or responsibility, but this knowledge remains incomplete if it is not tested in real educational situations. University courses, campus cultural activities, volunteer work, academic integrity practice and collective learning provide the social space in which moral culture becomes visible. Alfrević et al. show that higher education and civic involvement can help transform young adults' social responsibility into prosocial behavior [8]. This finding supports the final link in the model, where cultural values pass through educational mediation and become moral practice.

The proposed framework is conceptual rather than empirical. It does not claim to prove the effect of traditional Chinese culture through statistical testing. Its function is to organize the relationship between cultural resources, educational processes and student development outcomes. It can be used to examine how specific courses, campus practices or cultural programs influence students' value orientation, moral cognition, moral emotion, moral identity and moral practice.

Traditional Chinese culture offers important moral resources for higher education. Its role, however, depends on how these resources are used in educational practice. Values such as *ren, yi, li, xin*, self-cultivation and harmony cannot shape students' moral culture if they remain only as historical knowledge or cultural symbols. Moral formation requires a process of transformation. Students need to understand traditional values, relate them to their own experience, reflect on their conduct and practice them in real university life. Through this process, cultural resources may influence value orientation, moral cognition, moral emotion, moral identity and moral practice.

The framework proposed in this article clarifies the link between cultural resources, educational mediation and students' moral formation. It provides a theoretical basis for further research and for the design of university courses, campus cultural activities and moral education practices. Future research may examine this framework through empirical studies in specific educational settings

References

1. Peters M.A. Educational philosophies of self-cultivation: Chinese humanism // Educational Philosophy and Theory. 2022. Vol. 54, № 11. P. 1720–1726.

2. Snopkova E.I., Li. L. Analytical review of research on the formation of moral culture of university students in the educational process // Mogilev State A. Kuleshov University Bulletin. Series C. Psychological and Pedagogical Sciences (Psychology, Pedagogy, Methodology). 2026. No.1(67). P. 7-13.
3. Chan G.H., Lee G.K. W., Kong C.Y.W. et al. An innovative model of positive education with traditional Chinese moral values: An evaluation of Project Bridge // International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. 2022. Vol. 19, № 7. Art. 3797.
4. Tsiotsou R.H., Koles B., Paul J. et al. Theory generation from literature reviews: A methodological guidance // International Journal of Consumer Studies. 2022. Vol. 46, № 5. P. 1505–1516.
5. Tan C. Mindfulness and morality: Educational insights from Confucius // Journal of Moral Education. 2021. Vol. 50, № 3. P. 356–367.
6. Arthur J. Character education in universities // Church, Communication and Culture. 2024. Vol. 9, № 2. P. 329–344.
7. Tian X., Tang Y. The long-term impact of moral education on college students' psychological well-being: A longitudinal study revealing multidimensional synergistic mechanisms // Behavioral Sciences. 2025. Vol. 15, № 2. Art. 217.
8. Alfrević N., Arslanagić-Kalajdžić M., Lep Ž. The role of higher education and civic involvement in converting young adults' social responsibility to prosocial behavior // Scientific Reports. 2023. Vol. 13, № 1. Art. 2559.