

Research on the Influence of Confucianism on Chinese Management Model

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Abstract

In terms of influencing global history, Confucius (551-479 BC) stands alongside the founders of major world religions: Jesus Christ, Buddha and Muhammad. Following his death, his basic teachings were collected by his students into the classic Confucianist text *The Analects*. For many centuries, this book, which only has 20,000 words, has been required reading for any reasonably educated person in China. Confucianism comprises an ethical-philosophical doctrine, shaped and developed by its disciples and followers, which may be variously defined in terms of a worldview, lifestyle, political ideology, scholarly tradition and philosophy. Its interest, then, lies not merely in the ossified “words of Confucius”, but also as a living tradition that continues to be developed by its adherents. In the history of Chinese social and political thought, the development referred to as “Neo-Confucianism”, which arose during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), came to form the common traditional spiritual culture of China. Since the period of “reform and opening up” during the late 1970s and associated search for appropriate ideological guidelines, the subject of Neo-Confucianism has been the topic of particular research attention in the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

The Analects is not a book about management; nevertheless, after the passage of many centuries, the lifestyles, ways of thinking, habits, worldviews and communication modes of Chinese are all influenced by Confucian culture. (Yang, 1951)

Key Words Chinese intellectual tradition and philosophy, management model in China, Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism

Introduction

In ancient times, Chinese business culture was relatively stable in conformity with the ancient culture. On the marketplace, there were only public and private handicraft industry, small shops. Public industry and commerce were the major category, but the status of merchants was considered lower than that of scholars, farmers and artisans. Therefore, merchants had to find a way to join in the mainstream culture - to become Confucian businessman. To do this, they must always do business in an ethical manner with the desire to achieve social benefit. Some of the primary characteristics of Confucian businessman are as follows: honesty (*we are equally honest with elderly and youthful customers*); to fulfil promises (*Promise is debt*); help your own country (donate money to own country or donate food to help natural disasters.)

Confucius stressed the responsibility for ordinary people to society. *The Analects* explains about policy and administration so many times that *The Analects* is sometimes thought of as a management hand book. Since the Han dynasty (156 BC), Confucianism has been defined as a policy of governing the country, despite having been violated and criticised many times since this period. After 1919 and during the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism gradually began to lose its position as the most important ideological doctrine, determining Chinese traditional behaviour. However, after the adoption of the “Reform Period”, Confucianism once again became

a thread to connect the past, the present and the future. In the traditional texts of Confucius, Sun Tzu and Lao Tzu, politicians, businessmen and scholars have found practical advice on how to run a business and how to manage the people. In studying management, business strategy, business communications and human resource management, they discovered the idealised spirit of Confucianism, i.e. that the people is the most important element in a nation; the spirits of the land and grain are the next; while the sovereign is the lightest (Legge, 1861).

The core of a country is its people and collective spirit. Confucius thought that the policy of the country should be based on the culture of the state, manage [the people] should with mercy and conviction, should by re-educating people by moral virtue and etiquette. All managers need to correct their mistakes, be strict with themselves and work to improve themselves before retraining employees. Managers should love their employees like themselves.

We can sum up the influence to some tips:

Relationship (guanxi)

The concept of “guanxi” is a much more complicated than the Western concept of “network”.

Therefore, it is better to create your own guanxi and to be aware of the guanxi around you before you do anything.

This is an unwritten rule of China: if someone doesn't trust you and there is no guanxi between you, this means that you can't do business with that person.

Milk of human kindness (ren qing wei)

The society of China is full of human relationship, so everyone needs to learn how to work in the “milk of human kindness”. Emotional management has become one of the most valued models among China's business circles in recent years.

Emotional management falls somewhere between moral management and legal management.

In order to satisfy people's emotional needs, you need to work on their emotional investment, to be a “caring person”, so that the partners will achieve a sense of belonging and security.

Return present for present

Chinese society uses gifts to establish feelings of trust and dependence.

It has become a kind of etiquette in the social life.

Taking a long time to make decisions

The Chinese think a promise is a debt and that they should look before they leap, so they always take longer to make decisions.

In China, the decision-making process is based on ensuring that the balance of all parties is taken into account. Chinese people want to be sure that all points of view of the issue are considered first and all issues are thought out before coming to a conclusion.

Also, since the Chinese people do not like to tell “no” in a direct manner, it is best to never assume a deal will be struck until you hear it clearly.

Perfect calm; Saving face (liu mian zi) (Wang, 2012); (Po, 2009).

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