

## **U.S. Teachers' Perception of Confucian Teaching Philosophies and Methodologies**

Tak Chan  
Binbin Jiang  
*Kennesaw State University*

Mei Mei Xu  
*University of Georgia*

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to solicit the perceptions of United States teachers to examine the extent of their agreement with the Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies. A mixed research methodology was used in this study. Sixty elementary, middle, and high school teachers from 24 schools of five urban school districts of Georgia were randomly selected and invited to participate in the study. Thirty-two teachers (53.3%) representing 17 different teaching areas responded by returning an author designed survey. Quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and qualitative data were analyzed by examining emerged themes and patterns. The findings of this study indicate that teachers strongly support the application of Confucius teaching philosophies and methodologies in the classrooms of the United States.

### **Introduction**

Confucianism represents many ethical characteristics of the Chinese society. Chinese teachers, therefore, have inherited the lofty mission of Confucian culture (Hong, 2014). Evidently, the practice of Confucian philosophies has become an important component of the teaching of the Chinese language and culture in China. Therefore, the teachers in China have been responsible for instilling a set of Confucian moral values to their students in class.

However, as Hong (2014) pointed out, “the basis of Confucianism as enlightenment through education has encountered industrialized society, biased and narrow minded values, and the pressure of a bureaucratic system, rendering Confucian teachings solely an embellishment to teaching materials.” To a certain extent, the rigid teaching of Confucianism in Chinese language and culture classes may lead to dislike among students (Chen, 1997).

People have learned from experience that Confucian and Western fundamental values clash (Hong, 2014). Chinese language education in a country whose government gives first place to English leads to occasional clashes. The two extremely different value systems possess serious cultural and ideological differences (Zheng, 2006). Chen (1997) also pointed out that, in multicultural systems, interaction between Confucian culture, and other cultural elements showed how new cultural systems no longer displayed the characteristics of applying moral doctrine precepts to everyday situations.

As classes of teaching Chinese language and culture are becoming popular in the United States, how the American culture and the Chinese Confucian values could co-exist is an interesting question. As Chinese language and culture is a new program of a school curriculum in the United States, how U.S. teachers perceive the new program and its associated Confucius philosophies is

still unknown. Furthermore, as Confucius is the most respected teacher model in China, the extent of the U.S. teachers in agreement with Confucian teaching methodologies is of prime interest to many international educators.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **The Main Themes of Confucianism**

Confucianism is centered on the teaching and learning of *ren*, the benevolent relationship among human beings (Chen, 1985; Cheng, 2011; McEnroe, 2014; Zhou, 2005). *Ren* is the exhibition of true and supreme level of human behaviors (Bonnie, 2010; Chen, 1985; Cui, Wang, Yu, & Chen, 1995; Sun, 2008). Confucius highly praised the gentlemen who could practice *ren* to the highest ethical standard (McEnroe, 2014; Sun, 2008; Zhou, 2005). They could then serve as role models to support their families. Well-established families can be the models of the communities that could in turn be set as excellent examples for the management of the state and the country (Chen, 1985; McEnroe, 2014). Sun (2000) even stated that the purpose of Confucian education discipline was to eventually support the country with high quality human resources. In the practice of *ren*, Confucius pioneered the Doctrine of the Mean that directs human behaviors not to the extremes but to a good balance of one's beliefs and capabilities (Chen, 1985; Cheng, 2011; Cui, Wang, Yu, & Chen, 1995; McEnroe, 2014; Zhou, 2005).

### **Confucian Teaching Philosophies**

Confucius' focus in education is the cultivation of personal character. He placed a high standard of moral education on top of the education priority (Cui et al., 1995; McEnroe, 2014; Yang, 1993). He established a three-step process of advocating moral education: knowledge, humanity, and courage (Liu, 2013; Sun, 2000). He believed that everybody from all walks of life could learn regardless of their social or intellectual background (Cheng, 2011; McEnroe, 2014; Sun, 2000; Yang, 1993). According to Confucius, a passionate teacher should have a loving heart for his or her students (Low, 2010; Sun, 2000; Yang, 1993). Confucius directed his students in the learning process of studying, reflecting, and practicing (Liu, 2013; Low, 2010). In student motivation, Confucius emphasized that the contents of teaching and the ways of teaching should be of interest to the students to stimulate their learning desire (Low, 2010). Confucius demonstrated that lifelong learning was a necessary process in enabling human beings to realize and practice their true nature of living harmoniously with the universe and their fellow human beings (Sun, 2008). Above all, according to Confucius, the virtue of a teacher was a tireless life-commitment to the learning of his or her students (Sun, 2000; Yang, 1993).

### **Confucian Teaching Methodologies**

Confucius warned his students that it was a mistake to act on premature knowledge based on insufficient observation and/or insufficient processing (Beck, 2006; McEnroe, 2014). He also advised his students not to accept any ideas without carefully thinking through their real senses and values (Cui et al., 1995; McEnroe, 2014; Zhang, 2003). Among all his students, he taught them different things with different approaches because he believed that people had different potentials and learning paths that someone could learn something in one way better than others (Cheng, 2011; Liu, 2013; Low, 2010; McEnroe, 2014; Sun, 2000; Yang, 1993). He required his fellows to guide and direct their students to learn and to review past learned knowledge before acquiring new knowledge (Beck, 2006; Liu, 2013; Sun, 2000; Zhang, 2003). Confucius encouraged his students

to study collaboratively that through discussion they could learn from one another (Liu, 2013; Low, 2010; Sun, 2000). In Analects, Confucius repeatedly stressed the importance of role-modeling as an effective instructional method (Beck, 2006; Cheng, 2011; Cui et al., 1995; Sun, 2000) and to learn from positive and negative examples (Beck, 2006; Low, 2010; Sun, 2000).

### **Recent Studies on the Influence of Confucianism**

Sun (2008) studied the impact of Confucian ideas on the practice of modern adult education. In examining Confucius' core philosophy of *ren*, Sun analyzed the link between the human nature development and the need for social peace. Sun concluded that the Confucian perceptions on ends and means shed new light on reconsideration of the practical issues of modern adult education.

Chuang (2007) examined the influence of Confucian philosophy on adults' preference for learning. Over 580 college students were involved with the study to indicate their extent of agreement with the principles of Confucian philosophy. The findings of the study indicated that the agreement with Confucian philosophy is significantly correlated with alternative learning approaches such as individual learning, active learning, and group learning methods.

Hong (2014) studied Chinese teachers' cognitive practice of the Confucian Analects in three Asian countries. The researcher develops a scale of measuring practice of the Confucian Analects to investigate the differences in cognitive Confucian practice among Chinese teachers of Mainland China, Taiwan, and Malaysia. The results demonstrated that Mainland Chinese teachers scored higher than Taiwanese teachers and Malaysian Chinese teachers in relation to cognitive practice of the Confucian Analects. In several aspects of Confucian practice, there were differences between Taiwanese teachers and Malaysian Chinese teachers. However, research participants' demographics, such as gender, age, seniority and position did not make any difference in teachers' cognitive practice of the Confucian Analects.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Confucius' educational philosophies and teaching methodologies have been widely publicized in the United States in recent years because of cultural and economic exchanges between China and the United States. Through the establishment of the Confucius Institutes in the United States, many schools in the U.S. are starting Chinese language and culture classes at the request of the communities. How U.S. teachers receive Confucius educational philosophies and teaching methods remain unknown. Therefore, to inquire the influence of Confucianism of modern society through the practice of daily life is essential (Hwang, 1998). The purpose of this study is to solicit the perceptions of U.S. teachers to examine the extent of their agreement or disagreement with the Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent do U.S. teachers agree with the Confucian educational philosophies?
2. Do U.S. teachers adopt Confucian educational philosophies in their teaching?
3. To what extent do U.S. teachers agree with the Confucian teaching methods?
4. Do U.S. teachers apply Confucian teaching methods in their teaching?
5. How close are the U.S. educational philosophies related to the Confucian educational philosophies as perceived by U.S. teachers?

6. How close are the U.S. teaching methods related to the Confucian teaching methods as perceived by U.S. teachers?

## **Methodology**

### **Design**

A mixed research methodology was used in this study. U.S. teachers of elementary, middle, and high schools in Georgia, U.S.A., were invited to participate in a survey to solicit their extent of agreement or disagreement of Confucius teaching philosophies and methodologies. A research survey form entitled "A Teacher Survey on Confucianism in Teaching" developed by the researchers based on significant review of literature was used. A combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods has more insight to be gained and provides an expanded understanding of research problems (Creswell, 2009).

### **Participants**

Sixty elementary, middle, and high school teachers from 24 schools of five urban school districts of Georgia were randomly selected and invited to participate in the study. Thirty-two teachers (53.3%) responded by returning their completed surveys. About 54.2% of the teachers were from elementary schools, 16.7% from middle schools and 29.1% from high schools. They consisted of 31.2% male and 68.8% female with an average of 10.7 years of teaching experience. Approximately 60% of the participating teachers earned their graduate degrees and they represented 17 different teaching areas including early childhood education, English Language, Social Studies, Mathematics, Sciences, Reading, Chinese Language, Spanish Language, Music, Art, Physical Education, Special Education, Technology, and Business Education. Even though the sample is relatively small, it is a good representation of teachers by school level, by gender and by academic discipline. The limitation that all the teachers were from the State of Georgia prohibits the findings of the study to a wider nationwide interpretation.

### **Data Sources**

A 24-item Likert-scaled instrument about Confucian teaching was designed by the authors to survey school teachers. The questions were derived from the current literature on Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies, particularly on the work of Chan (1979) and Chen (1985). It consists of Part 1 (demographic information), Part 2 (teaching philosophies), Part 3 (teaching methodologies), and Part 4 (open-ended questions). Quantitative questions (4 point scaled) in Part 2 and Part 3 were immediately followed by corresponding qualitative questions. The instrument was tested for validity through a panel of ten school teachers who critically reviewed its contents, format, and language. These ten teachers were not included in the data collection of the study. Recommendations for improvement were incorporated into the revised version of the survey instrument. The internal consistency of the revised instrument was tested by using Cronbach Alpha Test (Overall Alpha = .882). The two open-ended questions at the end of the survey were constructed to solicit teachers' perceptions on their teaching philosophies and methodologies to determine how close they were related to the Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies. (See Appendix for a copy of the survey instrument.)

## Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the survey were analyzed in general and by subsets of teaching philosophies and methodologies to determine the extent of teachers' responses. Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations. Findings of quantitative data analysis were used to answer Research Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4. A parallel analysis of qualitative data collected from the survey was based on answers to the corresponding qualitative questions and the two open-ended questions at the end of the survey. Observation was made to consistencies in themes and patterns as prevailed among the teachers' responses. Because more time was required to respond to qualitative questions, many qualitative responses were simple and concise. Therefore, through qualitative data analysis, the most representative responses were quoted to indicate the general tendencies of responses. Findings of qualitative data analysis were employed to answer Research Questions 5 and 6.

## Findings

As a result of data analyses, the findings of the study are displayed to provide answers to each of the research questions as follows.

### 1. To what extent do U.S. teachers agree with the Confucian educational philosophies?

An analysis of the participants' responses indicated that most U.S. teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the Confucius' teaching philosophies with an overall mean of 3.459 out of a 4-point scale. *Promoting Character Education* has a mean of 3.188 with 87.5% of teachers indicating either strongly agree or agree and 12.5% indicating disagree. *Teaching Regardless of Student Background* has a mean of 3.645 with 100% of teachers indicating either strongly agree or agree. *Improving Teacher Knowledge and Skills* has a mean of 3.719 with 100% of teachers indicating either strongly agree or agree. *Perseverance in Teaching* has a mean of 3.710 with 100% of teachers indicating either strongly agree or agree. *Teaching with no Reservation* has a mean of 3.031 with 62.5% of teachers indicating either strongly agree or agree and 37.5% indicating disagree (See Table 1). Of all the teachers' responses to Confucius teaching philosophies, an average of 90% indicated they would adopt these philosophies in their classrooms.

Results of ANOVA also showed that teachers' gender, education background, and their years of teaching experience had no significant difference in their levels of agreement or disagreement with the Confucius teaching philosophies.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics – Means and Percentages of Agreement and Disagreement Teachers' Responses to Confucius' Educational Philosophies**

Teaching Philosophies	Means of Responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Promoting Character Education	3.188	37.5%	50%	12.5%	0%	0%
Teaching Regardless of Student Background	3.645	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Improving Teacher Knowledge and Skills	3.719	87.5%	12.5%	0%	0%	0%
Perseverance in Teaching	3.710	62.5%	37.5%	0%	0%	0%
Teaching with no Reservation	3.031	25%	37.5%	37.5%	0%	0%

## 2. Do U.S. teachers adopt Confucian educational philosophies in their teaching?

The results of data analyses indicated that 100% of the participating teachers confirmed that they would adopt the Confucian philosophies of teaching in *Promoting Character Education*, *Teaching Regardless of Student Background*, and *Improving Teacher Knowledge and Skills*. For *Perseverance in Teaching*, 87.5% of the teachers confirmed that they would adopt. For *Teaching with no Reservation*, 62.5% of the teachers confirmed that they would adopt (See Table 2).

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics – Percentages of Confirmation to Adoption Teachers' Responses to Confucius' Educational Philosophies**

	Confirmation to Adoption	Not Applicable
Promoting Character Education	100%	0%
Teaching Regardless of Student Background	100%	0%
Improving Teacher Knowledge and Skills	100%	0%
Perseverance in Teaching	87.5%	12.5%
Teaching with no Reservation	62.5%	37.5%

## 3. To what extent do U.S. teachers agree with the Confucian teaching methods?

An analysis of the participants' responses indicated that most U.S. teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the Confucius' teaching methodologies with an overall mean of 3.630 out of a 4-point scale. *Providing Differentiated Instruction* has a mean of 3.567 with 87.5% of teachers indicating either strongly agree or agree and 12.5% indicating disagree. *Stimulating Student Learning Potentials* has a mean of 3.818 with 100% of teachers indicating either strongly agree or agree. *Teaching Students by Role Modelling* has a mean of 3.600 with 100% of teachers indicating either strongly agree or agree. *Teaching with a Step-by-Step Approach* has a mean of 3.533 with 100% of teachers indicating either strongly agree or agree (See Table 3). Of all the teachers' responses to Confucius teaching methodologies, 93.75% of them indicated that they would apply these methodologies in their classrooms.

Results of ANOVA also showed that teachers' gender, education background, and their years of teaching experience had no significant difference in their levels of agreement with the Confucius teaching methodologies.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics – Means and Percentages of Agreement and Disagreement Teachers' Responses to Confucius' Educational Methodologies**

Teaching Methodologies	Means of Responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Providing Differentiated Instructions Potentials	3.567	37.5%	50%	12.5%	0%	0%
Stimulating Student Learning	3.818	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Teaching Students by Role Modelling	3.600	87.5%	12.5%	0%	0%	0%
Teaching With a Step-by-Step Approach	3.533	62.5%	37.5%	0%	0%	0%

## 4. Do U.S. teachers apply Confucian teaching methods in their teaching?

The results of data analyses indicate that 100% of the participating teachers confirmed that they would apply the Confucian methodologies of teaching in *Stimulating Student Learning Potentials*, and *Teaching with a Step-by-Step Approach*. For *Providing Differentiated Instructions*,

and *Teaching Students by Role Modelling*, 87.5% of the teachers confirmed that they would adopt (See Table 4).

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics – Percentages of Confirmation to Adoption Teachers' Responses to Confucius' Educational Methodologies**

	<b>Confirmation to Adoption</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Providing Differentiated Instructions	87.5%	12.5%
Stimulating Student Learning Potentials	100%	0%
Teaching Students by Role Modelling	87.5%	12.5%
Teaching Students With a Step-by-Step Approach	100%	0%

5. How close are the U.S. educational philosophies related to the Confucian educational philosophies as perceived by U.S. teachers?

An examination of the qualitative data provided by the U.S. teachers indicated that their teaching philosophies were closely related to the Confucius teaching philosophies. One participant commented, "I strongly agree with some aspects of Confucius' educational philosophy. Philosophy #4 (*Teaching with Perseverance*) and #5 (*Sharing with No Reservation*) seem to relate particularly to what I believe should be in a successful philosophy."

#### **Confucian Teaching Philosophy: *Promoting Character Education.***

In promoting for character education, teachers asked their students "to relearn their ABCs... that their Attitude and their Behavior equals their Character." They believed that character education helped "to develop moral, civic, good-mannered, behaved, non-bullying, healthy, critical, successful, traditional, compliant, or socially acceptable beings." One teacher also instructed students on "how to share, work as a team, and give each other respect." Another teacher focused on "building relationships" in the classrooms so that "if students have fun and trust their teacher, they will walk across a desert to make that teacher happy."

#### **Confucian Teaching Philosophy: *Teaching Students Regardless of Their Background.***

In teaching students regardless of their background, one teacher stated clearly that "every child deserves an education" and "every student can learn." "The teacher is responsible to work with the student to figure out how to reach the student regardless of where they are coming from." A teacher also said that he tried "to address non-ethnic background issues by promoting exchange to find out how each student's maturity, education, and socio-economic background position them for learning." "Each student is important, and is treated with respect." Another teacher added, "Each student learns a different way and it is our job as teachers to help them find their way to the best learning experience."

#### **Confucian Teaching Philosophy: *A Teacher Seeks Continuous Improvement.***

All the participating teachers agreed that continued professional learning is important to keep themselves updated particularly in technology development. A teacher said it all for many other teachers, "I participate in conferences, attend content meeting, and continue my education in professional development and university classes."

### **Confucian Teaching Philosophy: *A Teacher Demonstrates Perseverance in Teaching.***

Perseverance in teaching was stressed by the U.S. teachers in working with students. One teacher was straight forward by saying, "As their teacher, I would not give up on them, no matter how difficult it is." Another teacher also said that when one approach did not work, "I will continue to look for new ways to reach all students." "The more a teacher knows about a student," a teacher added, "the more a teacher can teach a student. My philosophy seems similar to Confucius'." Yet another teacher said with pride that "We make a living by what we get, we make a difference by what we give!" "Take time with each student regardless of how things may seem now as it can make a difference in a child's life."

### **Confucian Teaching Philosophy: *A Teacher Shares with No Reservation.***

In teaching students with no reservations, some U.S. teachers felt that they needed to share what they knew with students. "Teach with passion to get action." As one teacher put it, "I share experiences that relate to or promote the classroom learning experience." However, another teacher had a different opinion that "there are some reservations in the sharing of experiences because some of them may not be helpful or appropriate. A good teacher must be selective in sharing experiences."

6. How close are the U.S. teaching methods related to the Confucian teaching methods as perceived by U.S. teachers?

U.S. teachers varied their teaching methods in different teaching environments and were encouraged to try out alternative teaching methods. As one teacher said, "From my very basic understandings of Confucianism, there are some strong similarities."

### **Confucian Teaching Methodology: *Differentiated Instruction.***

In providing differentiated instructions, many U.S. teachers use "different methods of teaching and also allow students to work on a variety of assignments." "I do learning style surveys and try to implement activities to reach each learning style." Many teachers indicated that the use of modern technology had helped enhance their variation of teaching strategies. Some teachers are more cautious in delivering a new teaching approach.

As one teacher said:

Small group learning, peer learning... these methods help me to bring lesson to a center. There are those students that are ahead and then there are those that are reaching in the other direction. Self-directed learning is great but specific skills are needed that not all students have learned.

A special education teacher echoed by saying:

I also use a range of tiered assignments, differentiation, and specialized instruction strategies. A certain level of tracking is needed to set up appropriate differentiated strategies and specialized instruction. Data must be collected and analyzed to put groups together based on needs and readiness.

Other differentiated instructional methods were also cited by teachers of various teaching areas including: Small group instruction, visual aids, and auditory aids; lecture, practice, student-led discussions, and group work; guided reading and writing, read aloud, modeled reading and writing; notebooks and anchor charts; peer tutoring and technology; examples, models, demonstration and small group tasks.

**Confucian Teaching Methodology: *Inspiring students to stimulate their learning potentials.***

U.S. teachers, like Confucius, inspire their students to learn by focusing on their learning potentials. They challenge the students by offering different teaching and learning strategies. As one teacher put it, "I like to incorporate technology as much as possible and I enjoy having the students do most of the talking whenever possible, while I facilitate and ask higher order level thinking questions." Another teacher employed another approach to stimulate student learning. She added, "My students learn through exploration. They often are enjoying activities and school so much that they do not even realize they are learning. Students engage with one another with conversation and play an active role in their learning."

Other creative activities offered by teachers include: Hands-on science and research projects such as inventing a new cure for a disease; engineering design challenges and creative thinking; flipping classroom and experiential learning; lecture and Socratic style questioning and gaming such as Kahoot It, jeopardy, debate, choral response and graphic organizers; structured competition such as amazing race, interactive notebooks and cooperative groups.

**Confucian Teaching Methodology: *Role Modeling***

Like Confucius, U.S. teachers believe strongly that role modeling worked in teaching students of many learning styles. One teacher uttered, "Students need to see that whatever I am asking them, a real person lives it. I model good character in my classes." Another teacher also said it clearly that teachers led by example "in communication, experiments and other classroom activities." Another teacher added, "I try to employ examples of how I engage with and purvey science. Modeling, rote teaching, and student lead teaching are teaching strategies often used in class."

**Confucian Teaching Methodology: *Teaching Students with Patience and Step-by-Step Approach.***

U.S. teachers planned their class activities by teaching their students with patience and step-by-step. One teacher clearly stated that "Some things you cannot skip even a small step, until the background of a lesson has a better foundation. For first lessons on a topic I tend to go slower and step-by-step." Another teacher also responded that "I find that giving simple, easily understood directions, written and verbal, in addition to setting time limits, online timers, etc. ...works very well."

**Discussion**

The findings of this study are in agreement with the results of Chuang's study (2007) that the research participants are in high degree of agreement with the Confucius' teaching philosophies particularly in the areas of (1) *Teaching Regardless of Student Background*, (2) *Improving Teacher Knowledge and Skills*, and (3) *Perseverance in Teaching*. However, participating teachers in this study did not show a strong agreement with the Confucius philosophy of promoting character education. This is clearly indicating the difference between the Eastern and the Western educational beliefs. Character education is the main theme of Eastern culture whereas knowledge transfer is the emphasis of Western education.

In teaching students with no reservation, U.S. teachers showed a 65.5% agreement and a 37.5% disagreement because many of them perceived this Confucian educational philosophy from another perspective. They had certain reservations because they would like to be more selective in

their teaching approach and materials that could be more suitable for individual students. U.S. teachers take their students case by case.

In teaching methodologies, U.S. teachers indicated a high degree of agreement with the Confucian teaching methodologies with a variation of disagreement. While Confucius considered different teaching approaches and materials for certain individual students, many U.S. teachers have gone beyond that by having placement tests of student learning status before they decide the teaching method to be used. In addition, U.S. teachers have indicated the use of technology and other new teaching approaches to challenge their students.

Chuang's study (2007) indicated that the agreement with Confucian philosophy was significantly correlated with alternative learning approaches such as individual learning, active learning, and group learning methods. The findings of this study are similar. Confucian teaching methodologies of providing differentiated instruction and taking a step-by-step approach are strongly supported by U.S. teachers in this study. With averagely fewer students in U.S. classrooms, teachers could pay more attention to individual students to meet their needs.

The findings of this study indicate that teachers' gender, education background, and their years of teaching experience had no significant difference in their levels of agreement with the Confucius philosophies and methodologies. The results are in alignment with the outcomes of Hong's study (2014). Research participants' demographics in Hong's study, such as gender, age, seniority and position, did not make any difference in teachers' cognitive practice of the Confucian Analects.

Furthermore, educator perception differences between China and the United States were brought up in the studies of Chen (1997), Hong (2014), and Zheng (2006). The assumptions of these researchers have stimulated the interest of our research team to perform a study to see how U.S. teachers recognize, accommodate, and adopt Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies which are the central themes of Chinese culture. Consequently, the results of this study are surprisingly pleasing. Quite contrarily to the assumptions of Chen (1997), Hong (2014), and Zheng (2006), the unique findings of this study indicated an overall U.S. teacher agreement with the Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies. This is a clear indication that in matters of the essence of education, educators' beliefs, regardless of their cultural background, have a great deal in common particularly in their approaches to instruction and child development.

### **Scholarly Significance of the Study**

Many scholars have explored the history and intention of Confucian culture, but studies regarding the area of Confucian practices are relatively few. This study is designed to examine the perceptions of the U.S. teachers toward Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies. While the teaching of Chinese language and culture is becoming popular in the United States, it is important to understand how U.S. teachers react to the Chinese teaching philosophies and methodologies highlighted by the Confucian principles of human behavioral development. Teachers are the backbones of educational development. Their support of educational concepts will strongly endorse the success of educational concept implementation at school.

Results of this study indicated that many teachers in the United States tend to agree with the teaching philosophies and methodologies of Confucius. A great portion of them also expressed their intention to adopt Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies in their classroom instructions. This study represents one of the initial attempts to examine the adaptability of Confucianism in the education system of the United States. The significance of the study lies in the fact that not only does the study add to the scarcity of literature of the field, its findings shed

new light on the traditional assumption of contrasting educational perceptions due to cultural differences of China and the United States.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

This study is intended to be an initial attempt to examine the perceptions of U.S. teachers toward Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies. The findings of the study provide some very interesting points for discussion but certainly they are far from being conclusive. The following recommendations are made for further studies in the same topic.

1. The sample of the study needs to be more representative of a wider area in the United States. Teachers from other states from western and the northern part of the United States could be invited to participate in the study.
2. An in-depth case study could certainly allow the researchers to closely examine the issues from inside out. Direct interviews with teachers will disclose other significant perspectives not discovered in just a simple survey.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study strongly endorse the employment of Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies in the classrooms of U.S. schools as perceived by U.S. teachers. When U.S. teachers support Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies, it is a strong indication that the teaching of Chinese language and culture will continue to be accepted as a component of the U.S. school curriculum. U.S. teachers will seriously consider Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies as basis of instructional stand. While U.S. teachers have an overall agreement with Confucian teaching philosophies and methodologies, U.S. teachers tend to elaborate the Confucian ideas to particularly suit their individual classroom needs. At least, a positive observation is that U.S. teachers do not see Chinese culture represented by Confucianism as contrasting to the cultural values of the United States. Additional research in this field is needed to disclose new findings beyond the results of this study.

## References

- Beck, S. (2006). *How Confucius taught*. Available at <http://www.san.beck.org/CONFUCIUS3-How.html>
- Bonnie, M. (2010). *Two theories on education: Confucius and John Dewey*. (ERIC Documentary File: No. ED509159)
- Chan, T. C. (1979, August 28). Confucius's educational philosophy and teaching methodology. *Peimei News*, New York, USA.
- Chen, J. P. (1985). *Educational ideas of Confucius*. Wuhan, Hubei: Hubei Education Press.
- Chen, L. (1997). Confucianism and its status in multi-cultural structure. In Weiming Du (ed.), *Broadness of viewpoint about the development of Confucianism*. Taipei, Taiwan: Cheng Chung Press, p. 4–18.
- Cheng, T. (2011). *Confucius educational thoughts*. Available at [http://www.ct.taipei.gov.tw/multimedia/resources/file/346\\_2\\_88\\_20110406174627.pdf](http://www.ct.taipei.gov.tw/multimedia/resources/file/346_2_88_20110406174627.pdf)
- Chuang, S. F. (2007). *The influence of Confucian philosophy on adults' preference for learning: A comparison of Confucian adult learners and non-Confucian adult learners*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University, Louisiana.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design*. (3rd ed.) Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cui, Y. M., Wang, Z. P., Yu, C. H., & Chen, W. P. (1995). *Chinese traditional philosophy and education*. Shanghai: Shanghai Education Press.
- Hong, J. H. (2014). A study of Chinese teachers' cognitive practice of the Confucian Analects in three Asian countries. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255666994\\_A\\_Study\\_of\\_Chinese\\_Teachers%27\\_Cognitive\\_Practice\\_of\\_the\\_Confucian\\_Analects\\_in\\_Three\\_Asian\\_Countries](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255666994_A_Study_of_Chinese_Teachers%27_Cognitive_Practice_of_the_Confucian_Analects_in_Three_Asian_Countries)
- Hwang, K. K. (1998). Guanxi and mientze. Conflict resolution in Chinese society. *Intellectual Communication Studies*, 3(1), 17–37.
- Liu, K. (2013). Pedagogy: What are the differences between the educational methods of Confucius and Socrates? Available at <https://www.quora.com/Pedagogy-What-are-the-differences-between-the-educational-methods-of-Confucius-and-Socrates>
- Low, K. C. P. (2010). Teaching and education: The ways of Confucius. *Educational Research*, 1(12), 681–686.
- McEnroe, A. M. (2014). *Confucius's educational theory*. Available at <http://www.newfoundations.com/GALLERY/Confucius.html>
- Sun, P. (2000). *A history of Chinese education*. Shanghai, China: East China Normal University Press.
- Sun, Q. (2008). Confucian educational philosophy and its implication for lifelong learning and lifelong education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 27(5), 559–578.
- Yang, H. (1993). Confucius (K'ung Tzu) (551-479 BC). *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, 23(1–2), 211–19.

Zhang, H. (eds.) (2003). *A history of Chinese philosophies*. Xi'an, China: Northwest University Press.

Zheng, W. Q. (2006). What does Singaporean independence from Malaysia mean to Confucianism? In ChiiLiang He, JiaHwa Juh, & HuannRan An (ed.). *Social changes in Malaysia and Singapore in the last forty years (1965–2005)*. Singapore: Southern College Press, p. 43–50.

Zhou, K. (2005). *A basic Confucianism*. New York: Long River Press.

## Appendix

### A Teacher Survey on Confucianism in Teaching

**Section A: Demographics**

Gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_  
 Highest Education Level: Bachelor Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Master's Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
 Education Specialist \_\_\_\_\_ Doctoral Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
 Years of Teaching: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Current School Level: Elementary \_\_\_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_\_  
 Is your school a chartered school? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 Teaching Area(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Section B: Confucius Educational Philosophies**

**In each of the following items, please choose from one of the four choices: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree and respond to the short questions following.**

1. "Promoting character education is the major goal of teaching." (明德新民)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Disagree  
 If you agree, do you apply this educational philosophy in teaching?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 How do you apply this educational philosophy in teaching?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. "A teacher teaches students regardless of their background." (有教無類)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Disagree  
 If you agree, do you apply this educational philosophy in teaching?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 How do you apply this educational philosophy in teaching?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. "A teacher seeks continuous improvement of his/her knowledge and skill."  
 (學而不厭)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Disagree  
 If you agree, do you apply this educational philosophy in teaching?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 How do you apply this educational philosophy in teaching?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4. "A teacher demonstrates perseverance in teaching his/her students." (誨人不倦)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Disagree  
 If you agree, do you apply this educational philosophy in teaching?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 How do you apply this educational philosophy in teaching?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

5. "A teacher shares his/her knowledge and experiences with students with no reservation." (教而無隱)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Disagree  
 If you agree, do you apply this educational philosophy in teaching?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

How do you apply this educational philosophy in teaching?

---



---

**Section C: Confucius Teaching Methodologies**

**In each of the following items, please choose from one of the four choices: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree and respond to the short questions following.**

1. "Providing differentiated instructions based on student learning styles and potentials." (因材施教)

\_\_\_ Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree

If you agree, do you apply this teaching method in teaching?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

How do you apply this teaching method in teaching?

---



---

2. "Inspiring students to stimulate their learning potentials." (注重啓發)

\_\_\_ Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree

If you agree, do you apply this teaching method in teaching?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

How do you apply this teaching method in teaching?

---



---

3. "Teaching students by role modelling." (以身作則)

\_\_\_ Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree

If you agree, do you apply this teaching method in teaching?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

How do you apply this teaching method in teaching?

---



---

4. "Teaching students with patience and a step-by-step approach." (循循善誘)

\_\_\_ Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree

If you agree, do you apply this teaching method in teaching?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

How do you apply this teaching method in teaching?

---



---

**Section D: Open-ended questions**

- 1 What is your educational philosophy? Please give examples.

---



---



---

- 2 What teaching methods do you use in class? Please give examples.

---



---



---

**End of Survey**