

## Nothing but the Truth<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Education has had a long journey in different societies with different cultural backgrounds. All-rounded education has long been advocated in this long journey. Education today should emphasise not only teaching knowledge and skills but also nurturing people with morality and integrity. While liberal arts education has flourished in the West in recent years, by revisiting the approach and practice of education in the East and West throughout history, traditional Chinese education is suggested to be highly akin to the liberal arts education of today. Knowledge explosion, recent rapid scientific development, and also the impact of COVID-19 present severe challenges to higher education of our time. To deal with these challenges and for building a better future, a liberal-arts approach to education should be seriously considered by universities all over the world.

*Keywords:* liberal arts education, all-rounded education, higher education

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What I would like to focus on today is education, and on higher education to be exact, partly because this is an area I happen to know a little bit about. More importantly, it is an area which has such multiple impacts on society that it can be considered an abiding subject by any measure.

The first question we would like to ask is what education is all about. This question seems to be superfluous, particularly in an audience like this. Nonetheless, please bear with me and allow me to accompany you to travel through a time tunnel in order to go back 2000

years to see what our ancestors had to say about the subject.

The first person, who you must be quite familiar with, is Confucius (551-479 BC). According to him, education should be to seek truth, embrace virtue, practise compassion, and become immersed in the arts (至于道，据于德，依于仁，游于艺). In other words, it is all-rounded education. We all know Confucius also advocated six arts – rites, music and dance, archery (see Figure 1), horsemanship, calligraphy, and mathematics (礼、乐、射、御、书、数).

**Figure 1**

*An Archery Class at UIC*



*Note.* The picture shown here was not taken at the time of Confucius, but during an archery class at BNU-HKBU United International College (UIC) not long ago.