

## On the Family Education of Chinese College Students

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Received 12 May 2015; accepted 14 July 2015

Published online 26 August 2015

### Abstract

With the huge success of China's reform and opening up, basic education and higher education in mainland China have a rapid development. The annual enrollment of Chinese university students has been increased from tens of thousands of to now more than 8 million. However, China, as one of the four ancient civilizations, for thousands of years, has focused on filial piety and such traditional family culture has still been deeply affecting this generation of Chinese college students. From the current situation of the family education of Chinese students, this paper analyzes its causes and in the concluding section offers some comments and suggestions to guide the healthy development of family education of college students.

**Key words:** Chinese students; Family; Family education

Liu, H. (2015). On the Family Education of Chinese College Students. *Canadian Social Science*, 11(8), 53-56. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/7432> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7432>

### INTRODUCTION

As one of the four ancient civilizations, China is a country with a very strong family color. The relationship between family members relies heavily on the influence of thousands of years' traditional Chinese culture. Even though enormous social changes have occurred in mainland Chinese, this traditional family-centered culture is still

deeply influencing Chinese college students. Meanwhile, the implementation of the family planning policy along with reform and opening is a rapid cultural change for the development of Chinese society. This makes the vast majority of Chinese college students are the single child in their family. This abnormal family structure makes their parents and even grandparents over spoil them.

### 1. THE CURRENT FAMILY EDUCATION SITUATION OF CHINESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

In today's China, family education of college students does not draw widespread attention of parents and schools as early childhood family education and schoolchildren home education and it is ignored and quite scarce. The family education environment is not beneficial to individual physical and mental growth of college students and it also presents new challenges to China's university education.

#### 1.1 Family Education Concept Has Been Changed, But College Student' Family Education Does Not Attract Enough Attention of Chinese Parents

When most Chinese parents send their children to college campuses, they would think that they have put talents in the safety box and then turn their attention to provide financial support and no longer pay attention to family education. In today's world, the vast majority of college students are studying in far-away places. In mainland China, the form of collective accommodation of college students makes the relationship between themselves and the family gradually become alienated. With the influence of traditional exam-oriented education in China, plus the low theoretical level of family education in society, parents do not understand higher education and fundamentally ignore the importance of college students' family education.

## **1.2 Diversification of Family Structure Makes It Hard to Achieve Systematic, Sustained and Complete Family Education**

With the rapid growth of China's economy, the traditional family structure changes in contemporary China also appear increasingly complex. The main features are: First, since the implementation of family planning policy in China, that is, in most areas of China, one couple can only have one child and single child has become a common form of family for contemporary college students. Second, single-parent families and generational families have doubled and it has become an important part of new family structure of college students. More and more Chinese parents choose to divorce. Single parents' psychological imbalance due to divorce has caused a negative impact on college students' psychological health. Third, abnormal family structure makes parents and grandparents have excessive doting children, plus the requirements for China's exam-oriented education, family education tends to pay more attention to children's test scores and often overlook the cultivation of socially responsibilities, and it is easy to form a phenomenon of students with high scores and low capabilities.

In reality, China-style family crisis comes to the fore after the college entrance examination. Specific manifestations include: the parents are not well educated or even a small part of Chinese parents are illiterate so that they know nothing about family education of their own children at the university level; part of parents in poor families are busy working all day. It is difficult for them to provide financial support for children in university and there is no time to communicate and no way to conduct uninterrupted good family education for college students.

## **1.3 College Students Lack Knowledge of Family Education and There Is Lack of Communication Between Families and Schools**

Some college students think they are grown-ups and being successfully admitted to the university is the greatest comfort to their parents and they have completed the desire of Chinese parents to wish their children to become talents. They think that they have freedom of movement, can be responsible for their actions and are unwilling to accept guidance from the family. Especially for college students who come from a family where the parents are poor and not well educated, they usually reject family education.

Currently, college students are generally off-site educated. It is very inconvenient for universities to hold parent meetings and other forms of communication. Universities also fail to establish a long-term mechanism to contact parents; parents do not understand the performance of students in the school and cannot conduct family education with clear purpose or assume the responsibility of education with universities.

## **2. REASONS FOR THIS KIND OF FAMILY EDUCATION**

### **2.1 Family Planning Policy Accompanied With Reform and Opening Up Has Produced the Current Situation That the Vast Majority of Chinese College Students Are the Only Child in Their Families**

China's reform and opening up policy has been implemented for over 30 years and tremendous economic changes have occurred in mainland China. Meanwhile, in order to control the suppression of the rapid population growth to the Chinese economy, one child policy has been implemented in most parts of China. The vast majority of contemporary Chinese college students are the only child in the family. Abnormal family structure makes their parents and grandparents over spoil them. Such family structure makes it hard for Chinese college students to obtain scientific, accurate and systematic family education. Since the 1990s, the core tendency of family structure has become increasingly obvious and the one-child phenomenon is widespread. In 1995, the number of the only child in China was increased to 54 million and among 270 million households 20% are one-child families.

Contemporary Chinese college students were born after 1990. Their parents were mostly born in the 1960s and 1970s, grew up in the beginning of reform and opening up in China. The huge economic and educational development, especially after the reopening of college entrance examination in 1977, make it easy for them to access higher education, while the social problems they have experienced such as the enlarged gap between rich and poor and workers laid-off and so on make they realize the importance to win the competition in work and study. In order to have their children win in the competition, they often spared no effort to put this pressure onto the child. Many college students spent their suppose-to-be-happy childhood in a variety of specialty classes and training courses, which develop their wide interests, but also prevent them from receiving systematic family education, and it is easy to accumulate all kinds of barriers with their parents and psychological problems.

### **2.2 China's Exam-Oriented Education Ignores the Overall Development Young Children's Health**

In the development process of China's economy, the Chinese parents realize that, compared with their qualifications, highly educated and high-level talents are more respected by the community and their income is even more impressive. Parents see the situation and are very concerned about the growth of children from the family point of view and care about the children whether they will be accepted by society and obtain employment. However, the development of China's higher education cannot keep up with the rapid increase in population, especially for

those from poor families. To send their children to a good university and change the fate of the whole family, they just pay attention to students' achievement in school study and ignore the overall development of their health. The traditional exam-oriented education and "independence in higher education" ideology in the social transition have obviously presented in the parents of only-child college students. These parents spare no expense to have their children enter into key schools in the elementary, middle and high school level. To make the children have a good learning environment, they believe as long as children enter a key school, "their one foot has already stepped into university campus". Once the kids go to university, they have become the pride of the family and the parents also feel that the parental responsibility has been fulfilled, and the children have entered the safety box. Then they just provide financial resources and education is the task of faculties in universities.

### **2.3 Lack of Awareness of Family Education of Chinese College Students Causes the Lack of Family Education Theory**

In universities and colleges, first, teachers are professional in terms of school education, but they may not have much research on family education. They tend to underestimate the role of family education and commit the mistake of being self-centered. Second, in addition to the student governing organization's concern with students' family circumstances occasionally, teachers of core courses hardly ask for the family education situation of students. In the educational process, the work methods are simple. School will contact students' parents only when they have poor grades or disobey school disciplines. We can say that, the role of the only-child college students' parents is not played in the higher education system. As the popularity of computers in schools and families and the formation of the Internet, the school should take the initiative to cooperate with parents to promote parents to establish a correct and scientific education thinking and tutoring methods which conform to the new requirements of the times and form a new situation of comprehensive education and scientific education.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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From the results of this project, we can see that the improvement of Chinese college students' family education needs the joint efforts of society, families and universities. Society should focus on improving the general economic income of families and political stability and excellent culture to provide a good environment for the healthy growth of contemporary college students; in addition to teaching scientific and cultural knowledge, Chinese universities should play the good role as a bridge to contact parents and improve theoretical research, using scientific theory to guide family education; as parents

of Chinese college students, they should start from improving themselves and improve family education theory and skills. Only through the common efforts can we cultivate more excellent talents.

a) The whole society, especially the family and the school, should change the concept of education and put emphasis on college students' family education.

Due to the impact of exam-oriented education, family education used to focus only on the improvement of their children's academic performance, weakening the training of other aspects of ability of children, leading to a lack of ability of independent living, independent judgment, independent thinking, so that many students entering college feel perplexed. Except learning, they often need help and guide from their parents in interaction with others, interpersonal relationship and other life issues so that they can get through the college life.

Traditional school education has been challenged by increasingly complex social environment. Schools need to work together with parents to take responsibility to train college students. In today's such an open and information-based society, single school education mode alone is impossible to fully shoulder the full, diverse educational responsibilities. Therefore, universities must fully play to the role of family education. School education should be combined with family education and that is the development trend of school education in today's new situation.

b) To use modern technology to build a Trinitarian educational platform of family, school and society.

With the popularity of modern technology in mass media, especially the application of computers and multimedia, the social and personalized trends of education increases. Lifelong education is increasingly being accepted and the role of family education is more prominent. Currently the school is mainly responsible for science and technology and cultural education of students, while the focus of family education should be placed on the training of the mental and other non-intellectual factors that the school is often difficult to balance. We should increase the invest of computers and Internet and other modern equipment among school, society and the family, bringing the whole society to gradually form a network system of family education. Students generally study in different places and are from all over China, and some college students even come from places which are thousands of kilometers away from their schools. In addition to the traditional telephone, letters, SMS and other communication tools, China's universities should establish a network platform to maintain close contact with the parents. In addition to the basic situation of rules and regulations as well as the development of school and the learning, life and the rewards and punishments of students in the school must be promptly and effectively notified to the parents. Parent forums and other interactive

activities should be conducted. School teachers and parents discuss related issues, put forward their views and suggestions and meanwhile schools can respond promptly to parents' advice on the communication platform.

c) To conduct research on college students' family education, and constantly explore and improve educational methods.

In China, research on college students' family education is still in its initial stage, family environment factors such as family economic status, cultural awareness of family members, urban and rural family environment, the one-child family situation, the type of family structure and the parental educational ways have a significant impact on the healthy growth of college students. With the advent of more and more learning and psychological problems of college students, now the study has progressively attracted more and more attention of Chinese universities. However, compared with foreign college students' family education, one-child, children of single-parent families, problem children, children from poor families and other special groups of children should be taken seriously. By exploring and improving educational methods, parents and schools work together so that Chinese college students receive better family education to improve the physical and mental development of Chinese college students.

d) Parents should change the concept of education, strengthen self-construction and master effective skills and methods.

In order to successfully carry out college students' family education, parents should improve their ideological and moral qualities and cultural level through continuous learning. Many Chinese college students have a rejection attitude to their home education. It has a reason. It shows that the parental style and the negative influence of family environment restrict the healthy growth of college students. Therefore, if necessary, parents need to learn corresponding educational theory and knowledge and the expertise of college students, through the improvement of their own knowledge to educate and influence college students.

Chinese parents need to change the educational concepts and methods, with the attitude to making friends with college students, through equal communication to reduce barriers, moisten things silently and subtle family education is most effective. In the implementation process of family education of college students, the choice of what kind of educational content and methods requires a combination of the actual situation of college students and their parents' own conditions. It should vary in person, time and place so as to be individualized to make active and effective family educational outcomes, play the unique advantages of family education and promote the improvement of students' quality to make them grow better and become talents. College students growing up under the arbitrary outrageous, excessive spoiled and other adverse family environment are sensitive, suspicious and not confident enough. It is difficult to quickly adapt to the new environment and succeed, while those who grow up in a harmonious and caring environment are cheerful, confident, healthy, and easier to adapt to the new environment and get approval from people around.

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