

UNIT 1 TOPIC 7 FAMILY EDUCATION

Pre-knowledge

Before class, students should read Unit 1 Topic 7 to have a basic understanding of family education in both ancient and modern China. Students should also have knowledge of the structure of a Chinese family and the education system in China from previous topics.

Aim and Objectives

Topic 7 aims to provide students with some knowledge of the key aspects of family education in China and the roles different family members play in a child's education. It will also equip them with some knowledge of the evolution of education and family education in China and the influence of traditional values on each family and the whole society.

Teaching and Learning Activities

Chinese culture highly values education and academic achievement. The family is considered to be a fundamental component of the education system. A child's success is closely connected to the glory of the whole family. Thus, family education is a mirror of Chinese culture. Students are encouraged to further research on the topic.

Activity 1

Ask your students to interview their parents for a class discussion.

They may ask these questions:

- A. What role do you play in the family?
- B. What kind of expectations do you have of me?
- C. How would you describe your (parent-child) relationship with me?
- D. Do you care about education and my academic performance?
- E. What do you think about parents' authority?
- F. What is your attitude toward family education?
- G. What is the most important thing in family education to you? Is there something else that you feel should be included but have not?

Activity 2

Ask your students to interview two pairs of parents, one Chinese and one Western, using the questions from Activity 1. They then have to draw a chart comparing the similarities and differences.

Activity 3

Have each student prepare a PowerPoint presentation of his reflection on family education and its influence in China.

Activity 4

Show your students pictures of Chinese families and have a class discussion on these questions:

- A. What are these pictures about?
- B. Which pictures do you think describe the situation of a typical Chinese family?
- C. What kind of relationship is reflected by each picture?
- D. Have you ever had a similar experience as reflected by each picture? What did you feel?

- E. What are the possible causes of these situations? What do you think is the impact of grandparents having a role in educating the child?



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Activity 5

Find and use multimedia resources to help your students understand the classic works and famous examples in Chinese history related to family education. Guide them to summarise the different aspects of family education.

Activity 6

Have each student write a 300-word letter to their future children explaining their education philosophy.

Activity 7

Divide your class into groups of five or six. Have each group prepare a short play lasting four to five minutes with two scenes that illustrate the changes family education in China has undergone from the ancient times to the modern era. Each group will then present their play to the class.

Activity 8

Have your students gather as much information as they can in order to write a 600-word report in English comparing family education in China and in the West.

Activity 9

Have your students do Exercise 7 of the Workbook according to your teaching needs and progress.

Resources/Materials

Apart from those listed in the activities, you may also consult these resources/materials:

1. Lo, Feng, Chou, Mei-Ju & Pang, Ts'ui Chen (2016), "Chinese Family Education Policies' Development Condition and Its Inspiring Thinking". *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*. 4(4) 2016. pp. 40-55.
2. Zhang, Xiaochi (2013), "An Intercultural Study on Chinese Wolf Dad's Family Education". *Researcher World*. 4(2) April. Available at: <https://www.questia.com/read/1P3-3008516971/an-intercultural-study-on-chinese-wolf-dad-s-family>
3. Zhao, Yang (2014), "Family Education in China". *AFS Perspectives* [Online]. 3 March, 2014. Available at: <https://woca.afs.org/afs-announcements/b/icl-blog/posts/family-education-in-china>
4. LSE (2016), "Research in Mandarin | Chinese family and education". *London School of Economics and Political Science* [YouTube video]. 4 November, 2016. Available at: <https://youtu.be/NUuS1HcSwO0>
5. Weisner, T. (2016), "What is the most important influence on child development". *TEDx Talks* [YouTube video]. 15 August, 2016. Available at: <https://youtu.be/gIZ8PkLMMUo>

Assessment

1. Collect the notes taken by your students during all group and class discussions.
2. Prepare some questions and assess your students when they answer them verbally.

3. Compare family education in a Chinese family and in a Western family and write a report of 300 words on your findings.

Workbook Answer Key

1. What are the key characteristics of family education in China?

Students should consider these points:

- Family education is the education parents give their children from young. In China, parents are seen as the first educators of their children. Family education is therefore the most basic and important mode of education of the Chinese society.
- Parents put a lot of effort into educating their children and helping them grow as a person.
- Most parents expect their children to get high marks in every examination.
- Many parents also make their children attend various kinds of specialty classes to learn the arts, dancing or music so that they can earn extra credits when they take entrance examinations.
- Since an early age, children would have been taught that their parents have absolute authority and that they need to obey people older than them. Thus, children do not have much say in these issues revolving their education. Instead, parents exchange information among themselves to make sure that their children belong to the right club or group.

2. Why do Chinese parents greatly value family education?

Students should consider these points:

- Parents are their children's first teachers and role models.
- Family education relates closely to a child's healthy growth.
- Good family education helps a child get a good education and career.

3. The Western saying "spare the rod and spoil the child" means that if a child is not punished when he/she does something wrong, he/she will not learn what is right. Do you agree with this saying? Why? Is there a similar saying in Chinese? State the Chinese saying if there is.

Students should consider these points:

- It is a controversial issue.
- Similar sayings in Chinese: 不打不成器 (bù dǎ bù chéng qì), 棒子底下出孝子 (bàng zi dǐ xià chū xiào zǐ)

4. Group Discussion

In a group of three or four, compare the similarities and differences between family education in China and in the West.

Students should consider these points:

1. Similarities:

- Both types of family education are highly valued by its respective people.
- Both recognise the importance of starting family education at the birth of the child.
- Both have the same division of labour in terms of the parents' duties – the father teaches the child responsibilities and obligations while his mother teaches him how to care for others.

2. Differences:

- Chinese parents focus on the child's learning of knowledge and skills for examinations. Western parents put emphasis on developing the child's independence and life skills.
- The Chinese child is taught that his education is connected to the benefits of the whole family. The Western child is taught to believe in his education as developing him as an individual and benefit is considered a pursuit of value.
- Chinese parents focus on the child's moral character and attainment of knowledge, but ensure they obey authority. Western parents emphasise that parents and their children are equals; children are taught to be independent and have a mind of their own, and what they do is always encouraged.

5. Pair Work

With a partner, summarise the characteristics of family education in ancient China. Base your discussion on your understanding of the first 10 verses from the *Three Character Classic*.

Students should consider these points:

- Emphasis on moral character
- Parents' duties and obligations
- Filial piety to parents and fraternal love to siblings
- Befriending good-natured people
- The importance of gaining knowledge, starting from the day one was born

6. Mencius' mother moved house thrice because of her concern for his education. What do you think of her philosophy in education?

Students should consider these points:

- The influence and impact the environment has on a child as he grows up
- Peer influence
- One taking on the attributes of his peers and associates

7. Internet Search

We have read that Kong Rong gave away bigger pears to his siblings. Find a similar story from China and summarise it.

Students may consider the story of *Wang Tai and Jujubes* (王泰让枣) from the book “梁书

• 王泰传”:

- Wang Tai lived during the Southern Dynasty era. He was a very sensible and polite person. One day, Wang Tai and his cousins were playing together. Their grandmother watched them for a while and then called them in to have some dates laid out on a plate. Everyone grabbed a couple of dates from the plate and started eating but Wang Tai stood behind until they had all taken their share. Knowing that Wang Tai loved dates, Grandma asked, “Aren't you very fond of dates? Why aren't you taking them?” He then pointed to his cousins and replied, “Grandma, let them take the dates first! I'll have what is left.” Pleasantly surprised, Grandma said, “You're such a thoughtful child.”.

8. Why did Yue Fei's mother tattoo on his back? Is there a similar story from the West?

Students should consider these points:

- When the emperor sent Yue Fei to lead a battle against the Jin invaders, he was caught in a dilemma as there would be no one to take care of his elderly mother if he did so. His mother then told him that the country's needs should take precedence and tattooed the Chinese characters 精忠报国 on his back to exhort him to fight for the country.
- It appears that there is no similar story from the West.

9. What kind of education style is implied in the *Family Letters* by Fu Lei? What are your opinions on it?

Students should consider these points:

- In the area of building moral character, Fu Lei blended traditional Chinese and Western family education
- A unique father-son relationship
- Methods of teaching children

10. Internet Search

Find out the key features of family education in modern China. Include the roles that parents play.

Students should consider these points:

- Parents focus more on helping their children get high marks in every examination than on moral character education.
- Parents care so much about their children's studies that they do not ask them to help out in any other daily tasks.
- Parents are willing to sacrifice their own time, hobbies and interests in order to provide better conditions for their children.

11. Internet Search

What role are grandparents playing and what is the impact of their role on parenting in modern China?

Students should consider these points:

- Their role in decision-making in the family
- Their opinions on their children's and grandchildren's love and marriage affairs
- Their views on their children's and grandchildren's careers
- Their role and functions in looking after their grandchildren
- Their influence on their children's and grandchildren's social connections

Note: All URLs listed herein were ascertained to be accessible on 11 September, 2020.