

# Development of Personal Character in the Chinese Educational Model

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## **Abstract:**

This essay examines the impact of the Chinese educational model on the development of personal character among teenagers. Drawing from historical context, such as the imperial examination system, and contemporary practices in compulsory and secondary education, the author—a product of this system—analyzes how academic pressure, standardized teaching methods, and familial expectations collectively shape adolescent identity. The paper argues that the system prioritizes conformity and academic performance over individual expression, leading to suppressed self-identity and emotional well-being. It also explores the role of family environment, intergenerational influences, and limited parent-child communication in reinforcing these effects. The conclusion calls for educational reforms to foster more holistic and authentic personal development.

**Keywords:** Chinese education; character development; academic pressure; compulsory education; adolescent psychology; educational reform

## **Introduction**

The human character can be influenced by several factors, including genes, family environment and social environment where one lives. Worldwide, China is known for its unique approach to education, and I am a teenager who has undergone Chinese education. In this essay, I will discuss the role of Chinese educational environment on shaping teenagers' personalities. Chinese education is like a production factory that trains most of the children's character to be the same. This essay will first describe the pattern of Chinese education, and then come to the problems which are caused by this pattern.

## **What is the Chinese Education Model?**

China's education model traces back to the imperial examination system of the Sui and Tang dynasties. Examination results are directly related to an individual's social status. Although the imperial examination system was abolished at the end of the Qing Dynasty, its emphasis on examination results determining one's destiny still has a deep impact on modern education. *Fan Jin Zhongju*, a literature piece written in the Qing Dynasty, tells the story of Fan Jin's insanity from the excitement after passing an examination in the imperial examination system. All Chinese high school students learn about this literature. Ironically,

the purpose of this essay was to satirise the imperial examination system of the time.

In modern society, Chinese students do not have to endure the pressure of the imperial examination system. However, they face pressure to study daily and get into a good junior high schools, high schools and universities.

Compulsory education is a mode of education prescribed by law and guaranteed by the State, the Government and the family for children of school age. ('What is compulsory education?' 'China National People's Congress Website. 2000-12-17) In China, the majority of students in compulsory education are between the ages of 6 and 15 years old, covering the primary to junior high school courses. Compulsory education is intended to provide children with an initial world view, a sense of autonomy and a solid foundation for their future studies, life and work.

However, at a period when children should be learning and learning about the world in a relaxed manner, they are under pressure to prepare for their future, and are constantly being subjected to the notion of 'going to a good middle school, high school, and college' from all three sources: society, family, and school. Applying all your effort to get into a good university is equal to a successful life.

After nine years of compulsory education, most children continue their studies in senior school, which is the most stressful stage of the 12-year-long basic education cycle. It's like the last sprint of a marathon, all things for your university.

## How does primary and middle school education influence personality?

The influence of school on a child's character.

As I wrote above, all children are educated at this stage of their lives. Therefore, school and their teacher play a crucial role in shaping their personality. In terms of academic pressure, the first thing that children entering and leaving primary school are told is the importance of getting into a good junior high school (although junior high schools are automatically enrolled according to blocks during the compulsory education period, most of the children are pressured to choose a school in the last year of primary school due to both school and parental reasons). So, children cannot explore knowledge on their own and use their curiosity to drive their learning due to fast-paced learning courses and a plethora of knowledge.

From other aspects, teachers demand that every student be an obedient child, and 'discipline' and 'humility' permeate the children's school life. Of course, it is necessary to tell children about the importance of rules, but with the large

class size, teachers often yell at children to follow the rules, although it is a useful method, there are some disadvantages. Children can thus be afraid to show their nature and ideas, hiding them in the deepest recesses of their being. All ego can cause wrong. For a child who is already active or extroverted, the teacher's behaviour can make them doubt themselves and automatically label themselves as a so-called 'bad student'. Children's personalities are not right or wrong, but inappropriate school management can make them judge themselves. Maybe it doesn't show anything at this stage, but when they reach puberty, the sensitive child inside will suffer from it.

At the same time as they enter adolescence, most children enter junior high school, where they face pressure to learn and spend more time at school. During weekdays, children spend most of their day at school, from about 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.. In the final year of junior high school, students even knock off late than before. Children in this period may have a formed personality, but like in primary school, they cannot fully express themselves as a person, and academics, futures and rules are like invisible hands suppressing their true self. Therefore, many parents always ask 'Why are children so different at school and at home?' At school, a child is obedient and hardworking, while at home a child may spend most of his/her time on social media and talking back to parents. Which performance is the truest, and my answer is, neither. The child at school acts like a member of the flock, just following everyone and that can help stay away from breaking the rules. Children at home lack time to communicate with their parents because they spend most of their time on social media and they barely reveal true character. It is difficult to describe a person's character in a few words and to discover it through a few short communications. Parents, as the ones who spend more time with their children, lack the communication of mailboxes, thus failing to understand the truest children and their truest thoughts.

## Influence of family environment on children's personality

I am currently taking an A-level course, and in my biology course, I have learned genes cause major depression and schizophrenia, and that genes are crucial for shaping an individual's personality. However, I often wonder if the relationship between a child's personality and the home environment created by their parents is just as important. From my observation, the genes of the parents and the home environment are equally important.

As I stated earlier, Chinese parents do not have enough time to have a conversation with their child. But how

about the period that the children do not have to spend their time on school?

In modern society, a Chinese family includes grandparents and parents, and children. Grandparents educate children at an earlier stage of childhood because their parents go to work. The clash between traditional and more modern models of education cannot be avoided, and can sometimes lead to arguments within the family, which can cause insecurity and instability for the youngest children. Therefore, in psychotherapy, practitioners refer to the early childhood stages in the patient's life, as the effects of this stage are often overlooked.

After discussing the impact of intergenerational ideas, parents' personalities and ways of dealing with them can also affect their children. In the early stages of growth, children often imitate their immediate surroundings, and parents are one of them. When I was young, I noticed that some parents took a violent approach when solving problems in front of their children, and rightfully so, without being properly guided, the children would think that this was the best way to solve problems, thus tend to become violent and impulsive. During my long years of psychotherapy, my psychotherapist would ask me about my family and each member of my family's past and character, etc. As discussed, family greatly influences a person's character and their future life.

Peer pressure is a common term, but today I want to discuss the impact on children when parents feel peer pressure, but that impact still comes from the child's peers. As written above, children in China feel the pressure from future promotion almost from the beginning of primary school. Parents are equally aware of what their children will face in future and surprisingly choose to enroll them in many extra-curricular classes to prepare them in advance. This increases the pressure on kids who already don't have a lot of time off. Similarly, parents will divert their anxiety into demanding more from their children in terms of learning. Parents demand more from children with good grades, ignore the ideas children with weak foundations and criticise them. In an environment, children will tend to feel that their opinion doesn't matter. In the long run, they may turn out to be an unassertive person.

## Conclusion

The Chinese education model has its benefits as it sets up a good premise at the beginning of a person's development, such as an effective learning method will allow you to learn twice as much with half the effort in the future independently study project.

However, under the repressive education model in the long run, by the time children become adults and go out into society, our initial and truest character may have long disappeared in the process of growing up. Perhaps once students are away from such a depressing environment, their deepest hidden personalities are revealed more. At that point, those resurfaced personalities may push them to do something to endanger themselves family and even society. Because they have been repressed for too long. Therefore, I think it is important to change that, because it affects everyone who is in that situation, and it affects society as a whole.

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