

Life Strategies of Chinese Students Studying at Universities in the Border Areas of the East of Russia

Bazhenova NG* and Lutsenko EL

Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University, Birobidzhan, Shirokaya Street, 70a, 679015, Russian Federation

*Corresponding author: Bazhenova NG, Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University, Birobidzhan, Shirokaya Street, 70a, 679015, Russian Federation, Tel: 8 (42622) 4-66-11; E-mail: 356751bazhenova@inbox.ru

Received date: February 17, 2016; Accepted date: February 24, 2016; Published date: March 04, 2016

Copyright: © 2016 Bazhenova NG, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Abstract

The paper presents an integrated analysis of subjective meanings and Chinese students' system of values defined by means of the opinion poll in order to measure their social well-being and to explore their life strategies. According to the results of the sociological research, which involved 250 respondents, there were made the following conclusions: Chinese young people feel confident enough at a Russian university. They estimate rather highly and objectively their own starting positions, opportunities and prospects. Communal tension and lack of self-esteem are not frustrating, but on the contrary, motivating factors, indicating a high degree of success achievement and responsibility for their own life. Graduating from Russian universities young people of China are ready to move, compete, and build a career. Our research has shown a quite mature character of values, the absence of a purely youth identity.

At the turn of the 80s of the last century, defining the vector of the policy of reforms and openness, Deng Xiaoping made a crucial decision on sending annually abroad to study three thousand students and scholars. He believed that if at least 15% of them came back it would be a big victory for the country. For thirty years (1978-2009) 1.62 million people left China to study abroad and the third of them returned [2]. Nowadays, China has become the world leader in the number of students studying abroad, and the country's education system is developing, covering wider areas [3]. At the same time, international cooperation and education exchanges have become more frequent and regular.

Results and Discussion

There is a continuous demand of getting Russian education in the Chinese provinces. It is supported by an active bilateral economic cooperation, which requires experts, professionals having economic, legal knowledge and language skills, understanding the peculiarities of another country, knowing it as if "from within." No wonder that the majority of future Chinese students of Russian universities begin to master Russian, having just started to study.

Thus, an understanding of life strategies of Chinese students studying in Russia will allow us to project better and more adequately their employment, possibilities of using the experience of socialization in the host country taking into account the values of life.

It is supposed to analyze in this article integrated subjective meanings and value orientations of Chinese students revealed by means of the sociological survey to define their social well-being and life strategies. The sociological survey "Life strategies of Chinese students studying at Russian universities" was conducted during 2013. The sampled population consisted of 250 Chinese students of 18-22 years old studying at Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University and Far Eastern State Transport University.

The theoretical and methodological basis for understanding the problems stated in the article is provided with the scientists (Zapesotsky AI, Ikonnikova SN, Lisovsky VT, Kozlov AA, Yu Kolesnikov, Ya Rubina L, Petrova TE, Slutsky EG, Yu A Zubok, Yadov VA, Giddens E, Durkheim E), including Chinese

Keywords: Youth; China; Life positions; Students; Inter-ethnic relations; Border; Border areas

Introduction

On the one hand, the education of the population is an indicator of the government's attention to these issues; on the other hand, it is a demonstration of the potential for new advances and breakthroughs in various areas of social activity. Therefore, if you get quality education abroad you study the best educational and professional practices. Multichannel vision and specific training of specialists help to produce a synergetic effect on the development of one's own territory [1].

People's Republic of China is the largest country in the world by the number of students studying in various educational institutions (more than 300 million people). Over the past half-century, the country solved the problem of the nine-year compulsory education, spending 2% of global expenses on general education.

ones (Deng Xiaoping, Mao Zedong, Chen Itszy, Zhan Jiemin, Zhang Xiang Guo).

The selection of Chinese students as objects of sociological survey was conducted at Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University (Birobidzhan) and Far Eastern State Transport University (Khabarovsk) that actively cooperate with Chinese universities of Heilongjiang, the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia and Jilin. A significant part of Chinese young people living in these provinces enters the above-mentioned Russian universities of the Far East.

The respondents have been living in Birobidzhan and Khabarovsk from six months to four years. The survey was conducted in Chinese. The attitude to the survey was twofold. Some students treated it with great caution and fear; others doing with understanding and confidence.

The questionnaire included questions about socio-demographic characteristics, reasons for entering leading regional universities, elements of life activity of young Chinese in Russian cities, future plans, etc.

More than half of Chinese students studying at Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University and Far Eastern State Transport University are receiving bachelor's and master's degrees in Pedagogical Education, specialization Russian as a Foreign Language or learn the Russian language. Other, most attracting for foreigners, areas of study are Economics, Management, Pedagogics and Psychology, Sociology.

The main motive of getting higher education in order to become a qualified specialist was marked by two-thirds of the surveyed students (62%). About half of the respondents (45%) marked "a desire to become an educated person, an intellectual, to develop their abilities." Approximately the same number of respondents (42%) expressed "a desire for living an interesting student life." The vast majority of the surveyed students (89%) is convinced that it is difficult to achieve something in life without a higher education degree. It should be noted that the position "to become a qualified specialist" does not exclude the position "a desire for living an interesting student life." However, it may also be regarded as a contraposition, depending on the priority of internal motivations of students.

Higher education has always been highly valued in the Chinese society, and getting a degree is considered to be the key to personal well-being and success of a whole family [4]. Today only wealthy Chinese families can train their children abroad. It is also mentioned in our research, as 72% of the Chinese students rated the socio-economic status of their families above average or high [5].

As a whole, 92% of the students say that Russian education gives them a quality education in their chosen specialty. It is important, because a future profession of a Chinese student is mainly chosen at the family council. Parents' opinions were taken into account by the absolute majority of the respondents. It illustrates an effective component of the family values of Chinese youth, i.e. the priority of seniors' opinion [6]. Nevertheless, the "foreign" tendencies influence not only

existing national views, manners of behavior, but also help to see the new, progressive and innovative. Adoption of Western models of life makes Chinese youth more open, reduces stiffness, and enhances conformity in behavior.

After graduating from universities, a third (35%) of Chinese students is going to be employed according to their degrees, and 29% expect to find a well-paid job preferably in the public administration, but not necessarily according to their degrees. For this category of students such values as "wealth", "stability" and "equality" take first place. However, only a tenth (12%) of the respondents is going to come back to China to find work in higher or secondary schools. A small part of the surveyed Chinese students (5%) wants to stay and work in Russia. Only one person would like to continue his education at a graduate school.

The analysis of sociological data allows us to note that personally significant arguments of an occupational choice are an interest in a profession, individual abilities and inclination to this kind of activity. However, the meaning of the choice shows a strong correlation with a socio-professional status and value orientations of a young man. At this point, social and professional orientations are regarded as two parts of one whole. The problem is that the subjective intentions of a Chinese young man face with the objectively existing social structuration. So, a future profession depends on an appropriate education. Getting this or that degree is restricted with the possibilities of the enrolment, and in the new conditions with the material resources of the family.

Among the reasons for continuing education all the respondents prefer a professional choice. A "status" motive is the strongest in the age group from 18 to 22 (42%).

Twelve percent of the respondents bind up their future with a teaching career, which has been honorable in China so far. Only a small part (5%) of the surveyed Chinese youth connects their life ideals and aspirations with a career of a businessman. It is connected with the fact that they have already had business in Russia that is run by their parents.

Life plans for the future employment of more than half of the respondents are associated with various types of jobs, but without strict guarantees. Only statistically insignificant number of students (4%) knows where they will work, as they are related to the employment of their parents.

The assessment of the financial status of more than half of the Chinese students (60%) shows that they deny themselves nothing. Every third (34%) marks that he or she lives well, although they have to make a lot of efforts. At the same time none of the respondents chooses the variants "with difficulty, barely making ends meet," "disastrously, not getting enough to eat, resigning basic necessities." It is explained by the fact that the source of their material support is formed only from the parents' income. Their financial situation is stable enough, and the decision to study abroad was made deliberately and responsibly. Only a small part of the respondents (6%) considered the question "personal" and incorrect, so they did not give an answer.

In conditions of today's globalization, not only economic, socio-political, but also cultural determinants of consciousness and behavior of people are changing. The reassessment of many historical traditions takes place, life strategies are changing [7]. Value reacceptation is particularly significant for youth, as it is connected with its future.

So, Chinese students' opinions on the main criteria of life success are rather interesting. For the vast majority (97%) of them honestly lived life has the maximum value. The second variant is an "opportunity to be one's own boss." "Interesting work" is in the third place. We believe that the value orientations inherent in the Chinese people have been subjected to a significant transformation in the mode of confrontation between tradition and innovation.

However, traditions are still an integral spiritual property of the younger generation of the Chinese nation. So, on the fourth place there are such criteria as reliable friends, an opportunity to live well, a high position, a career growth, fame, popularity. In addition, such criteria for life success as "wealth", "a prestigious property" are important only for a tenth part of the Chinese students who have already been included in the family business, have capital abroad.

At the same time, such factor of a successful life as "trust, trusting" is not welcomed by Chinese students. It can be explained by the fact that they shape their destiny counting only on themselves and they are close and separate.

Values are embedded in life greater or lesser extent, so that the trajectory of a person's life by demonstrating their behavior and identifies at this update. Values can be fixed, (felt, to reflect) in the mind and expressed in words - articulated, provides an explanation of what a person is or how she would like to appear in the perception of others. Among the forms of selection arise contours received subject and orderly way, a single, integrated and coherent set of values, which is largely crystallized certainty individual subject.

Understanding the value concepts students significantly, in our view, also because the individual values may be embodied in social institutions. Institute essentially embodies the value when it creates the daily operation of the areas in which this value is woven into the practice of maintaining behavior that demonstrates this value, thus providing conditions for its further implementation in the life of this institution.

The value - this is common in the social organization of the system of the samples by means of which people relate and mediate their interaction with each other. Values are the matrix of human socialization. With their help, systematized and generalized social experience of life. Social value can be any object if it is the focal point of the aspirations and desires of groups or individuals, is considered as an essential condition of existence. Implemented through a variety of values, social norms [8]. The rating represents one of the social and psychological forms of social norms. Shared by individuals and groups of social values are a measure of actions in terms of their relation with the system of values. The most important element of individual behavior - Assessment (structuring) of the situation - largely due to its system of values.

The analysis of traditional value orientations of Chinese young people allows us to note that they are strongly influenced by both rapidly reforming Chinese society and foreign culture. Despite this Chinese youth does not deny traditions, but supports the simultaneous coexistence of individualistic (Western) and public (traditional) ideals.

The problems of youth and family problems are closely interrelated due to a number of reasons, among which the most important scientist identifies the following:

- First, in the structure of value orientations and activities of interpersonal contacts and device personal life occupy one of the first place;
- Secondly, the style of family and marital sexual behavior, marital status largely determine the demographic structure of the whole family, prospects of its development [9].

The last few decades students, more preferred civil marriage registered. Thus, family relationships are among young people not in last place. We believe that students civil marriage is economically advantageous to rent an apartment and to farm much easier and cheaper together, can also be stabilized sexual relations. According to the obtained data, the majority of students participating in the survey have developed a positive attitude towards civil marriage, and they believe this form of relationship is acceptable.

Thus, among the list of values, which was offered to the respondents, the first place was given to such a value as "a family, children" (99%). Relations between sexes have remained traditional, although they were "modernized". Thus, for example, some young people have civil partnerships without an official registration.

In the second place in the hierarchy of value orientations there were security, prosperity, human rights, stability, democracy, equality, freedom, they were chosen by three quarters of the respondents (78%).

The study shows that the most important rights and freedoms for modern Chinese youth are the right to life (19%), freedom of speech (15%), the sanctity of life, the home (19%), the right to free education (12%), the right to own property (10%), the right to free medical care, social security (17%).

At the same time the majority of young people (51%) feel quite free. 40% of the respondents feel some limitation of their freedom [10]. It is interesting to mention that the degree of freedom significantly increases if the level of income of a young man also increases.

It is known that the civic stand of an individual is formed under the influence of a number of factors (national, cultural, etc.) by various agents (institutions of government, education, family, etc.). No wonder that in the third place for young people of China there are the values of law, labor, great power statehood, justice (60%). Thus, young people generally associate themselves with the citizens of their country, consider China as their homeland.

The factor determining the dynamics of the value orientations of students in China should be classified as a

balance between the traditional value grid and its innovative modulation, i.e. the balance being searched for at the axis "tradition-innovation". The most significant expression of this balance is the synthesis of all the best that was in the past and what can be taken from the experience of the development of the modern civilization, missing negative and optimally assimilating the best that modern society produces.

It should be noted that young people are becoming more open, it is evidenced by their participation in various university activities. However, it does not mean that the national trait of a Chinese, i.e. introversion is disappearing and changing into extroversion. The observation of Chinese students proves that communicating with Russian students, their classmates, roommates in the dormitory, they still keep a distance, preferring to spend more time with the members of their own community. At the same time Russian students respect this fact. Chinese students value relationships with friends of their circle, whereas they are reserved with "strangers". They think, family, friends are obliged to take all measures in order to fulfill their obligations in respect of their loved one. It should be mentioned that unlike Russian students, the Chinese are rather tolerate to any kind of inconveniences.

This research shows quite an interesting presentation of values, self-esteem, declared intentions and communicative characteristics. The general tendency is quite a high degree of social optimism of Chinese youth. Contrary to the usual and journalistic clichés Chinese youth feel confident enough at Russian universities. They estimate rather highly and objectively their own starting positions, opportunities and prospects. Even if the responses show the signs of uncertainty, anxiety and nervousness, they are most likely associated with competitive background, unfamiliar environment that increases activity and hidden potential. Communal tension and lack of self-esteem are not frustrating, but on the contrary, motivating factors, indicating a high degree of success achievement and responsibility for their own life. Graduating from Russian universities young people of China are ready to move, compete, and build a career. Our research has shown a quite mature character of values, the absence of a purely youth identity.

Concerning the content of the values there was revealed the absolute predominance of pragmatic goals and targets, such as material wealth and high status. Young people completely adhere to traditional, universal social values, local, i.e., their own goals, family, but at the same time, they are patriotic.

The results allow us to mark an expressed intention to keep family ties, a desire to make a family and bring up children.

Chinese students are noted for such qualities as loyalty, respect for elders, and respect for their traditions. So, nothing can stop a young Chinese to go home to celebrate the New Year, as it is a long tradition to celebrate the New Year with your family. Following in traditions gives the young man a sense of the correctness of his life, of his actions. As a result, on this basis there is developed and formed a claim for recognition himself a decent and law-abiding member of a society.

Filial piety and obedience are evident even in the choice of a profession and a university. This decision is made only by the head of the family and is not a subject to a further discussion. In this regard, Chinese young people may experience a number of difficulties, both psychological and educational. For example, the profession chosen by the family may not reflect his own choice. However, for a young Chinese, a parents' word is very important.

Conclusion

One of the indicators of value-motivational potential of students is transferred. The bulk of the respondents identified as one of the most important values, "human rights" and "legitimacy". This fact allows us to say that modern students understand that the formation of a civilized society is based on respect for the laws and their submission is not dependent on any conditions.

Having an idea of the value range of students, you can work out the direction of development of the socio-cultural environment of the University to enrich semantically benchmarks students to narrow the gap between articulated and demonstrated values, to realize their life's priorities through social practices that are included in the construct educational environment of the University.

An empirical study of life strategies of Chinese students allows us to determine the typology and structure of the life strategies of the social groups and individuals from the position of sociology. It is important to mark the predominance of their internal aspirations, based on the values of family, professional development, attachment to "their", serving the community. However, freedom, independence and integrity have a significant meaning. The material well-being, the achievement of a social status, running a business and others are regarded as the mechanisms for implementing life strategies. Training in Russia in itself is also a part of a life plan, a kind of a mechanism to acquire a life strategy.

References

1. Giddens A (2009) Politics, Sociology and Social Theory: Encounters with Classical and Contemporary Social Thought, Polity Press, London, Cambridge 312.
2. Lisowski VT (2008) Youth, love, marriage, family (Case Study), (3rd edn) Science, St. Petersburg 368.
3. Ritzer G (2012) The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Sociology, Wiley-Blackwell 690.
4. Wu S, Wu L (2008) The impact of higher education on entrepreneurial intentions of university students in China, Available from Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development 15: 752-774.
5. Collins R (1994) Four sociological traditions, Oxford University Press 336.
6. Tian M, Lowe JA (2013) Intercultural Identity and Intercultural Experiences of American Students in China, Journal of Studies in International Education 8: 103-114.

7. Liu F, Wang Y, Lin D (2012) Analysis on the key influential factors of graduate's employment in China, *Reputiology* 5: 64-68.
8. Huang JZ, Cai LA (2011) Destination choice model for transitional travel: College students in China, *Tourism Management* 32: 697-699.
9. Wong SC, Liu GJ (2010) Will parental influences affect career choice?: Evidence from hospitality and tourism management students in China, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 22: 82-102.
10. Bazhenova NG, Lutsenko EL (2014) Life strategies of modern students, *Sociology of Education* 8: 75-85.