

THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM: AN EFFECTIVE FORM OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE?

LILI DONG and DAVID W. CHAPMAN

Abstract – This study investigates the effectiveness of Chinese international education assistance through an examination of student experience in the Chinese Government Scholarship Program, an important mechanism of Chinese foreign aid. Grounded in Pascarella's (1985) model of the impact of college on students, the study investigates participants' level of satisfaction with their higher education experience in China and their perception of the role of the scholarship program in promoting positive relationships between China and the scholarship students' home countries. Findings indicate that participants are generally satisfied with their experiences in China and are positive about the impact of the program in building friendships with their home countries. The authors discuss the implications of these findings in terms of China's emerging prominence as a provider of international development assistance.

Résumé – LE PROGRAMME DE BOURSE DU GOUVERNEMENT CHINOIS: UNE FORME EFFICACE D'AIDE ÉTRANGÈRE ? - Cette étude examine l'efficacité de l'aide chinoise à l'éducation internationale par un examen des expériences étudiantes dans le programme de bourse du gouvernement chinois, un mécanisme important d'aide chinoise aux étrangers. Fondé sur le modèle de Pascarella (de 1985) de l'impact de l'université sur les étudiants, l'étude examine le niveau de satisfaction des participants quant à leur expérience de l'enseignement supérieur en Chine et leur perception du rôle du programme de bourse comme favorisant des rapports positifs entre la Chine et les pays d'origine des étudiants boursiers. Les résultats indiquent que les participants sont en général satisfaits de leur expérience en Chine et sont affirmatifs quant à l'impact du programme dans la mise en place d'amitiés avec leurs pays d'origine. Les auteurs discutent des implications de ces résultats en termes de l'éminence croissante de la Chine comme fournisseur d'aide au développement international.

Zusammenfassung – DAS STAATLICHE CHINESISCHE STIPENDIENPROGRAMM: EINE EFFEKTIVE FORM DER AUSLANDSHILFE? – Diese Studie überprüft die Effektivität der internationalen Studienbeihilfen in China mithilfe einer Untersuchung studentischer Erfahrungen im staatlichen chinesischen Stipendienprogramm, welches einen bedeutenden Bestandteil der chinesischen Auslandshilfe darstellt. Auf der Grundlage von Pascarella's (1985) Modell des Einflusses akademischer Bildung auf Studierende untersucht die Studie den Grad der Zufriedenheit der Teilnehmer mit ihren Erfahrungen in höherer Bildung in China sowie ihre Wahrnehmung der Rolle, die das Stipendienprogramm in der Förderung positiver Beziehungen zwischen China und den Heimatländern der Studierenden spielt. Im Ergebnis zeigen sich die Studierenden generell zufrieden mit ihren Erfahrungen in China und bewerten den Einfluss des Programms auf den Aufbau von Freundschaften mit ihren Heimatländern als positiv. Die Autoren diskutieren die Implikationen dieser Ergebnisse im Zusammenhang mit der zunehmenden Bedeutung Chinas bei der Bereitstellung internationaler Entwicklungshilfen.

Abstract – ¿ES EL PROGRAMA DE BECAS DEL GOBIERNO CHINO UNA FORMA EFECTIVA DE AYUDA EN EL EXTERIOR? – Este estudio investiga la eficacia de la asistencia internacional en educación de la China mediante el análisis de las experiencias hechas por estudiantes en el Programa de Becas del Gobierno Chino, un mecanismo importante de la ayuda al desarrollo prestada por este país oriental. Basado en el modelo de Pascarella (1985) sobre el impacto del *college* sobre los estudiantes, el estudio investiga el nivel de satisfacción de los participantes con la experiencia en estudios superiores que han hecho en la China y su percepción en cuanto al papel que juega el programa de becas en el fomento de relaciones positivas entre la China y los países de origen de los estudiantes becados. Los autores debaten sobre las implicaciones que podrán tener estos resultados en vista de la creciente importancia que está teniendo la China como proveedor de ayuda internacional al desarrollo.

Резюме – СТИПЕНДИАЛЬНАЯ ПРОГРАММА ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВА КИТАЯ: ЭФФЕКТИВНАЯ ФОРМА ОКАЗАНИЯ ПОМОЩИ ИНОСТРАНЦАМ? – В данном исследовании рассматривается, насколько эффективной является международная помощь Китая в области образования на основе изучения опыта студентов стипендиальных программ правительства Китая, важного механизма оказания Китаем помощи иностранцам. Основываясь на модели Паскарелла (1985) о влиянии колледжа на студентов, в данном исследовании рассматривается, насколько студенты-стипендиаты довольны полученным опытом в сфере высшего образования в Китае и каково их понимание роли стипендиальных программ, направленных на развитие позитивных взаимоотношений между Китаем и странами, из которых они приезжают. Результаты указывают на то, что участники в основном довольны своим опытом в Китае и положительно оценивают влияние программы на создание дружественных отношений с их странами. Авторы данной статьи обсуждают значение таких результатов в связи с новым неординарным положением Китая среди провайдеров международной помощи, направленной на развитие.

Building goodwill through development assistance programs

An important component of China's official development assistance (ODA) program is the Chinese Government Scholarship Program (CGSP), which offers international students the opportunity to receive free education at Chinese colleges and universities. The objectives of this program are to familiarize scholarship recipients with Chinese culture and build goodwill toward China while assisting the recipients in getting a higher education, conducting research, or receiving training in the Chinese language. The success of China's ODA depends in part, then, on the extent to which these international students are positive about their post-secondary experience in China and their experience promotes a positive regard for China as a nation. Despite over 50 years of history and the large number of recipients of Chinese Government Scholarships, few systematic studies have examined whether the scholarships have been beneficial to the recipients. To address this deficit,

this study investigated CGSP recipients' perceptions of their higher education experience in China and their attitude toward China as a country.

Background

International aid has become an indispensable part of international relations; almost all countries operate as either aid donors or recipients (Hook 1995). China is one of the few countries that assume a dual role in foreign aid activities – it has been both giving and receiving foreign assistance since its founding in 1949. Among the many governments involved in foreign assistance activities, the diverse rationales, mechanisms, practices, and results of foreign aid are a widely debated topic (Bobiash 1992). Considerable research has focused on the strategies employed by industrialized countries in managing their aid programs and on the strategies employed by aid-recipient countries in utilizing that aid. Relatively little research has examined the rationale and strategies of ODA employed in countries that are themselves both donor and recipient. In this respect, China provides a particularly interesting case study.

Previous studies on scholarship recipients in China

Studies on the experience of scholarship participants in earlier years of the program found mostly negative results. Few students were satisfied with their experience in China, and the Chinese international education programs were unsuccessful in all respects. Sources of dissatisfaction were the excessive supervision and political control of the international students, a lack of a favorable climate for international education, and limitations on the free flow of ideas (Chen 1965). A further source of dissatisfaction came from the relationship between international students and the international student offices in the universities. Even when the authorities had good intentions, difficulty in communication led to relationships between the various parties being marked by distrust and conflicts (Goldman 1965). One result was a decline in the numbers of international students coming to China and a decline of enthusiasm within the Chinese government for this type of aid program (Chen 1965).

International students, however, did enjoy special privileges, including better accommodation and dining. In addition, during the times when China operated as a rigid planned economy, international students could buy commodities beyond the reach of the Chinese people and did not need to wait in line to purchase them. On the other hand, these privileges also contributed to further segregation of the international students from the Chinese (Chen 1965).

Despite the negative feelings in the earlier years, international students eventually reported having more positive experiences in the academic and human aspects of their study in China. They developed feelings of sympathy and admiration towards the Chinese people. The passage of time helped them to realize the value of their experience in China and helped them understand people and how people respond to external forces (Goldman 1965).

The most recent comprehensive study of international students and scholarship recipients is Gillespie's (2001) study of Chinese Government Scholarship recipients from Africa. She concluded that the scholarship program was not well received by the African participants in her study. However, the conclusions of the study were mainly drawn from focus group with only a few of the African participants and failed to give voice to the wider group of participants in her study. Consequently, the results may have only limited validity as an evaluation of the CGSP.

No systematic studies of the scholarship program have been conducted on the Chinese side. Some accounts reporting students' personal experiences in China are available in Chinese journals. In these sources, students report overwhelmingly positive views of studying and living in China (Kalima-N'Koma 2004; Sheppard 2004; Veras and Veras 2004; Zhang 2004). These accounts, however, might only represent some international students' experiences in China and may have limited generalizability. The present study was undertaken as a broader investigation of the experience of CGSP students, with particular attention to the extent that the current CGSP is contributing to a positive regard for China and thereby fostering the diplomatic goals of ODA.

Research questions

This study investigated three questions: (1) to what extent are scholarship recipients satisfied with the quality of their experience in China? (2) to what extent are factors identified in the Pascarella (1985) model associated with scholarship students' satisfaction with their higher education experience in China? and (3) to what extent did scholarship recipients believe that the scholarship program contributed to building the goodwill of the Chinese government and promoting friendships with scholarship recipients' home countries? Answers to the first two questions will indicate the extent to which the scholarship program has been able to accommodate the needs of the scholarship recipients and what aspects might need to be improved. The third question examines the extent to which the scholarship program addresses the broader purpose of strengthening the friendship between China and other countries.

International student education and scholarship program

Beginning of international student education

The earliest international students in China, following the founding of the PRC, were entirely from communist countries (Chen 1965). In 1950, Tsinghua University in Beijing received the first group of 33 students from East European countries, which represented the beginning of international student education in China (Zhang et al. 2003). The record high during this beginning period was between 1958 and 1960 when approximately 2,000 students from over 40 countries studied in China on government scholarships. These students were drawn from more Asian and African countries. Students spent their 1–2 years studying the Chinese language before taking classes in their academic major. The government scholarship covered the cost of their tuition and accommodations and students also received monthly allowances to pay for food and other expenses (Chen 1965).

In 1956, for the first time, the Chinese government planned to enroll 50 scholarship students and 30 self-funded international students from Western countries. Only one or two students went to study in China, yet this represented the first step in accepting international students from Western countries (Tian et al. 2004).

Disruption of international student education

On 2nd July 1966, at the beginning of the 10-year Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the Commission of Higher Education of the PRC notified all Chinese embassies in foreign countries that they should stop accepting international students wishing to study in China. Two months later, the Commission informed the foreign embassies in China that all international students studying in China should suspend their studies and return to their home countries for a year and that the Chinese government would pay for their travel expenses back home. This moratorium on foreign students in China was extended and subsequently lasted for 6 years, 1966–1971 (Tian et al. 2004).

Gradual resumption of international student education

The State Council established the Science Education Team in 1970; the foreign affairs department of this Team was responsible for managing international education exchange programs. From 1972, the government gradually started accepting international students. In 1972, 200 students from Tanzania and Zambia started their studies in China with scholarships from the Chinese government. The State Council decided to accept 300 Chinese Government Scholarship students and 200 self-funded students in 1973; as a result, 383 students went to study in China. Subsequently, during the second half of

the Cultural Revolution (1972–1976), China received about 2,100 international students from 72 countries (Tian et al. 2004).

Development of international student education

The 1980s saw the growth of international student enrollment in China. In 1980, 52 academic majors in 42 Chinese higher institutions were deemed eligible to receive international students. By 1986, that number had grown to 300 majors in 82 higher institutions. In an effort to increase the effectiveness of the Chinese Government Scholarship Program, the State Education Committee increased the proportion of international students with a more advanced degree background. The Education Committee also modified the rules to allow classes taught in languages other than Chinese, mainly in English (Tian et al. 2004).

Recent trends in international student education

The People's Republic of China Educational Law, passed on 18 March, 1995, was the first educational law issued by the Chinese government which legally protected the rights of international students studying in China. As such, it signified a move toward a more mature program of international student enrollment in Chinese higher education (Tian et al. 2004).

On 1st January 1997, the Chinese government made important modifications to the administration of the Chinese Government Scholarships. The China Scholarship Council (CSC) was established as a non-profit institution affiliated with the Ministry of Education (as opposed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and charged with the administration of the scholarship programs. While the central government is still responsible for determining the number of scholarships to be awarded, the China Scholarship Council is responsible for overseeing the student admissions process and ongoing administration of the program (Foreign Students Studying in China n.d.). Since 2000, the China Scholarship Council has also been responsible for the organization and implementation of an annual review of scholarship recipients (Ministry of Education 2000).

Between 1950 and 2000, 88,000 Chinese Government Scholarships were awarded, an average of 1,760 per year. These students accounted for 22% of the 407,000 international students who studied in China over those five decades.

China has been progressively increasing the number of Chinese Government Scholarships it awards. The 6,153 scholarships awarded in 2003 (Ministry of Education n.d.) grew to 6,715 in 2004 (China Scholarship Council 2005) and to 10,000 in 2006 (Delaney 2006). Government plans were to further expand the number to 11,000 in 2007 (Wu and Zhen 2006). At the same time, with more international students coming to study in China, the government and universities have committed to implementing concrete measures to improve education quality and educational services for international students in China (Wu and Zhen 2006).

Overview of the Chinese government scholarship program

The Chinese government offers both full and partial scholarships. Full scholarships cover registration, tuition, laboratory fees, fieldwork expenses, basic teaching materials, lodging, and free medical services. In addition, scholarship recipients receive monthly allowances and one-time settlement allowances. Since 2003, living allowances were adjusted to 800 *yuan* (\$104 US dollars) per person per month for undergraduate students and non-degree Chinese language students; 1,100 *yuan* (\$143 US dollars) for Master Degree students and non-degree Visiting Students; and 1,400 *yuan* (\$182 US dollars) for Ph.D. students and Senior Visiting Students. Scholarship recipients whose study terms lasted one school year were given 600 *yuan* (\$78 US dollars) as a one-time resettlement allowance at the beginning of the school year. Those whose study term was less than 1 year were given 300 *yuan* (\$40 US dollars). Partial scholarships cover one or several of the items included in full scholarships (Zhang et al. 2003).

The number of scholarships to be awarded to each country is determined through negotiations between the Chinese government and the corresponding governments, educational divisions, institutions and related international organizations. Applicants need to apply for the scholarships through the government or appointed institutions of their own country, or through the Chinese embassies or consulates in their home country. Applicants can choose to apply to undergraduate, graduate, or non-degree Chinese language programs offered by these institutions (China Scholarship Council n.d.). Eighty-eight Chinese universities, offering more than 300 specialties, are designated by the Chinese Government as eligible to receive these students (China Scholarship Council 2005).

Since 2000, the Ministry of Education has conducted a formal annual review of all scholarship recipients to assess their continuing eligibility, based on academic and conduct criteria established for this review. This review determines whether scholarship students qualify to continue receiving their scholarship for the following academic year; students who fail the annual review may choose to continue their studies in China by providing their own funding. The China Scholarship Council is responsible for organizing this annual review, individual colleges and universities conduct the review with their scholarship students (Ministry of Education 2000).

Rationales for the scholarship program

According to the China Scholarship Council (n.d.), the stated objectives of the scholarship program are to “strengthen mutual understanding and friendship between the Chinese people and people from other countries and to develop cooperation and exchange in the fields of education, science, culture, economy and trade between China and other countries.” Another, but

unspoken, rationale for the scholarship program is to contribute to China's "soft-power diplomacy" (Shambaugh 2005a, b).

"Soft power" is the ability to get "others to want the outcomes that you want" through co-optation instead of coercion (Nye 2004). Students from other countries get to know China through educational exchange programs (Johnson 2005). More to the point, the scholarships provide a mechanism for training future leaders from other countries who might serve as opinion leaders once back in their home countries. In this respect, these educational exchange activities are the continuation and supplement of national foreign policy (Tian et al. 2004). Among other things, the Chinese government hopes that the goodwill created through these scholarships will play a subtle role in winning support within recipient countries for the "One China" policy and for China's position in international affairs (Bezlova 2005).

Liu (2001) reasoned that China's educational assistance would also reinforce the grassroots support from African countries. Cultivating future leaders of other developing countries would have far-reaching influence on the future of the relationship between China and its aid recipients. When describing a training class for African diplomats at a Chinese university, French (2005) claimed that "while the aid seems aimed at winning African hearts, the classes in diplomacy, constantly refined over the past decade, seem aimed more at swaying African minds."

While statistics are incomplete, more than 30 of the international students who have studied in China since 1950 have taken official positions at the ministerial level in their home countries, more than 20 of them have served as ambassadors to China on behalf of their countries, more than 30 of them have served as counselors to China; and over 200 have become professors and associate professors at universities in their countries. In addition, many of the middle-aged and young diplomats in the embassies of foreign countries stationed in China have studied in China, and a great number of students who have studied in China are now engaged in different exchange and cooperation activities with China across many fields (Zhang et al. 2003).

Impact of scholarship students' experience in China

Given the investment China has made in awarding scholarships to students from other countries, especially developing countries, it is surprising how little evaluation and research have been conducted on how scholarship students actually regard their educational and personal experience while in China. The payoff of the scholarship program as a form of foreign assistance is only gained if students are positive about the education they receive and if their experience in China fosters a positive regard for China as a nation. The present study addressed this issue through an investigation of the extent to which scholarship recipients are satisfied with the quality of their experience in China, the factors associated with their level of satisfaction, and

the extent to which scholarship recipients held favorable views about China as a country.

Method

The study was grounded in Pascarella's (1985) model of the impact of college on students. The model posits that five aspects of students' college experience are determinants of student satisfaction with their college experience (Pascarella 1985: 50), including organizational characteristics of institutions, student background, interactions with faculty and student peers, institutional environment, and quality of student effort. Previous research suggests that, of these factors, the amount of student effort and interactions between students and the various environmental factors exert the most direct influence on student satisfaction (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991). Though Pascarella's model and Institutional Integration Scales (Pascarella and Terenzini 1980) were based on college students in the United States, the consistency of findings suggests that the model might be appropriate for use in international settings.

The present study was carried out from September to December of 2006. Altogether, 270 recipients of Chinese Government Scholarships studying in Beijing and Shanghai completed a modified version of the Institutional Integration Scales. Data were collected on peer-group interactions with Chinese students, interactions with the Chinese faculty, the faculty's concern for scholarship recipients' development and teaching, and scholarship recipients' academic and intellectual development on Chinese campuses. Second, scholarship recipients' perceptions of their experience in China and their opinions towards the Chinese government were investigated through additional questions included on the survey. These questions collected data that allowed an examination of whether the scholarship program was achieving the undeclared goal of promoting friendship between China and the scholarship recipients' home countries, thus building China's "soft-power."

Beijing and Shanghai were chosen because, of the 88 universities that are eligible to receive scholarship recipients, 35 are located in these two cities. The other 53 universities are scattered in two other municipal cities and 16 provinces and autonomous regions throughout China. Moreover, the vast majority of the international students are concentrated in Beijing and Shanghai. Of the over 1,000,000 international students registered in 2005 (*Guangming Daily* 2006), Beijing had about 40% of them ("*Beijing to Enroll More Foreign Students*" 2004) while Shanghai was home to another 20% (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission 2005).

Potential respondents were contacted through the offices of international programs at Chinese universities and, in some cases, by directly visiting dormitory and classroom buildings used by international students. Data were gathered using either a structured interview format or a pencil-and-paper format. Respondents included 117 degree students and 148 non-degree

students. The degree students consisted of 58 bachelors, 36 masters, and 23 doctoral or professional respondents. Participants were from 58 countries. The sample included 132 females and 137 males.

The Institutional Integration Scales were slightly adapted to the Chinese context. All of the original five item categories were maintained, e.g., peer-group interactions with (Chinese) students, interactions with the (Chinese) faculty, the (Chinese) faculty's concern for student development and teaching, academic and intellectual development, and institutional and goal commitment. Some items in the original Institutional Integration Scale were modified, since the degree levels of the scholarship recipients were varied. Additionally, two scales were added to the instrument to examine scholarship recipients' opinions towards their experience in China and the scholarship program.

Demographic questions were also added, including nationality, gender, academic major, length of stay in China, and Chinese language skills. An opened-ended question collected respondents' additional comments about the scholarship program and their experience in China. Data were collected on a four-point Likert-type scale (agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree and disagree). The questionnaire was made available to respondents in both English and Chinese.

The 31 items on the survey were organized into five independent variables: (a) peer interactions with Chinese students; (b) interactions with the Chinese faculty; (c) the faculty's concern for student development and teaching; (d) academic and intellectual development; and (e) institutional and goal commitment. The dependent variables for the analysis were: (a) the participants' level of satisfaction with their experience in China; and (b) participants' opinions on whether the scholarship program would contribute to the long-term friendship between China and the scholarship recipients' home countries.

Data analysis and results

The reliability and inter-correlation of the original scales were computed to examine whether the scales were appropriate for the intended analyses. Initial analysis indicated high inter-correlations among the original scales. To reduce problems of intercolinearity, a factor analysis with Varimax rotation was computed. Based on those results, seven new scales were identified: (1) personal efforts; (2) peer interactions with Chinese students; (3) interactions with the Chinese faculty; (4) the Chinese faculty's commitment to students; (5) cultural and intellectual engagement; (6) personal values; and (7) perceived friendliness of Chinese students and faculty.

Factor scores for the seven factors were used for further analyses. Regression analysis was used to examine the extent participants' educational experience in China and predict their level of satisfaction. Nearly all respondents (91.6%) were positive about the likely impact of the scholarship program in

promoting the long-term friendship between China and their home country. Discriminant analysis was used to test differences between those most positive and those somewhat less positive responses regarding this long-term impact on the seven factors. Finally, content analysis was used to analyze data from structured interviews and the open-ended survey question.

Findings

(1) What are the scholarship recipients' perceptions of scholarship program and to what extent are they satisfied with the quality of their experience in China?

Three of every four respondents (77.4%) were satisfied or tended to be satisfied with their overall experience in China, 19.9% tended to be dissatisfied, and 2.7% reported being dissatisfied with their overall experience. Nonetheless, 23% of the respondents reported not feeling safe living in China; and 33% reported being unsure of how to solve logistical problems that they might encounter at the university.

(2) To what extent were factors identified in the Pascarella (1985) model associated with scholarship students' satisfaction with their higher education experience in China?

The regression analysis (Table 1) indicated that the seven factors together explained 48% of the variance in respondents' satisfaction with their educational experience in China ($F = 26.90$, $p < .001$). Respondents who invested

Table 1. Results of the regression analysis to predict respondents' satisfaction with their study experience in China

	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.
	<i>B</i>	SE			
Constant	1.699	.027		62.514	.000
Personal efforts	.259	.028	.468	9.292	.000
Peer interactions	.116	.028	.209	4.154	.000
Interactions with faculty	.131	.027	.243	4.837	.000
Faculty's commitment to students	.159	.027	.293	5.839	.000
Cultural & intellectual engagement	.145	.028	.257	5.122	.000
Personal values	.050	.027	.092	1.826	.069
Perceived friendliness of Chinese students and faculty	.013	.028	.023	.456	.649

$R^2 = .48$; $F = 26.90$; $p < .001$.

Table 2. Factors discriminating between respondents who “agreed” and “tended to agree” that the scholarship program would promote friendship between China and their home country

	Wilks' Lambda	<i>F</i>	Sig.	Standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients
Personal efforts	.898	23.215	.000	.785
Interactions with faculty	.843	19.051	.000	.569
Cultural & intellectual engagement	.791	17.834	.000	.546

Eigenvalue = .264; Canonical $R = .46$; $\chi^2 = 47.6$; $p < .001$.

more personal effort, who were more likely to think that their faculty members demonstrated great commitment to students, and who were more engaged in Chinese cultural and intellectual activities reported higher levels of satisfaction with their experience in China. The extent of interactions with Chinese faculty and peers, while significantly related to satisfaction, were less important determinants. Differences in respondents' personal values and in the perceived friendliness of Chinese faculty and students were not significant predictors of respondents' satisfaction.

(3) To what extent did scholarship recipients believe that the scholarship program contributed to building the goodwill of the Chinese government and promoting friendships with scholarship recipients' home countries?

Results of the discriminant analysis (Table 2) explained 21% of the total variance in group membership ($R^2 = .21$, $p < .001$). Respondents who agreed and those who tended to agree that the scholarship program would promote goodwill between China and their home country differed mainly in the extent of their own personal effort, the extent of their interactions with Chinese faculty, and their cultural and intellectual engagement in Chinese culture.

Interview results and responses to the open-ended questionnaire item indicated that respondents were generally satisfied that the scholarship program provided a good opportunity to learn the Chinese language and gain an understanding of Chinese culture. Additionally, they reported gains in knowledge in both academic and non-academic areas. At the same time, they thought that (1) the monthly living allowance provided by the scholarship program was insufficient; (2) some international students affairs staff tended to be unfriendly and impatient; (3) a 1-year Chinese language training was not enough for attending classes taught in Chinese; and (4) the quality of accommodation needed to be improved.

Discussion

Findings from this study support five main observations:

(1) The level of satisfaction of scholarship recipients' experience in China is generally high.

While few studies have examined the experience of students studying in China (Lulat and Altbach 1985: 483), the few studies available have portrayed the experience of international students as unsatisfactory (Chen 1965; Goldman 1965, Robinson 1982, as cited in Lulat and Altbach 1985; Gillespie 2001). In contrast, the current study found that respondents' level of satisfaction towards their experience in China was high. The majority of students was satisfied with their experience studying in China; believed that they had made the right choice in coming to China to study (94.3%); thought that the course work was relevant to their personal interests (83.1%); and felt they had been treated well at their university (88.9%). Most scholarship students would recommend the experience of studying in China to other international students (90.0%). Perhaps most importantly, respondents (91.6%) believed that the scholarship program would contribute to the development of a long-term friendship between China and their home countries.

Where concerns existed, they centered on not feeling safe living in China (23%) and not knowing how to solve logistical problems they encountered at their university (33%). Other concerns were a desire for a higher monthly allowance, better accommodations, a more positive attitude on the part of student affairs personnel, and improved pedagogy in Chinese language classes.

(2) Personal efforts, perceived faculty commitment to students, and engagement in Chinese culture were the most important determinants of students' satisfaction with their experience in China.

Participants' personal efforts, perceived faculty commitment to students, and students' cultural and intellectual engagement were the most important contributing factors in determining their level of satisfaction. The more effort they invested to their studies in China, the more committed they perceived the Chinese faculty to be, the more engaged they were in cultural and intellectual activities, the more satisfied they were with their experience in China.

This pattern of findings suggests that students and instructional staff together share the responsibility for the quality of international students' experience in China. Students who worked harder benefited more from their experience. At the same time, the support and encouragement of the instructional staff were strongly related to students having a better educational experience. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that academic success and positive interactions with local citizens are particularly important in the experience of international students (Lulat and Altbach 1985).

At the same time, the present findings differ from research in the United States. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005) have consistently found that interactions with faculty and other students play a major role in determining the impact of college on students. These factors appear to be somewhat less important in predicting the satisfaction of international students studying in China. One possible explanation is that these students tend to be somewhat more segregated from local students and to interact more among themselves. This could be a fruitful topic for future research.

(3) Respondents believed that the scholarship program is beneficial in promoting long-term friendships between China and their home countries.

The vast majority of the participants believed the scholarship program would contribute to the development of long-term friendships between China and their home countries. Students often expressed their appreciation for the opportunities provided by the scholarship program, e.g., learning about the Chinese people, the language and the culture. For the most part, the rationale of the Chinese Government Scholarship Program has been achieved.

(4) Results are more positive than those of previous studies about the experience of international students in China, suggesting that China may be succeeding in its effort to improve the educational experience of international students.

Conclusions from earlier studies on the Chinese Scholarship Program (Chen 1965; Goldman 1965) indicated that participants held overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards their China experience. Gillespie's more recent study (2001) found similar results. The more positive findings in the present study might indicate that the operation of the scholarship program and the ability of the Chinese universities to work with these students are improving. This may indicate that the Chinese government's determination to improve quality education and educational services in higher education (Wu and Zhen 2006) is yielding positive results.

(5) US models of student engagement in higher education may not be fully applicable to international students studying in China.

Pascarella's (1985) college impact model does not necessarily apply to the participants in this study. Previous studies suggest the amount of student effort and student interactions with faculty and fellow students has a direct impact on students' college experience (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, 2005; Tam 2002). However, in this study, while respondents' interactions with and perceptions of Chinese faculty were related significantly to participants' beliefs that the scholarship program promoted friendly relations, interactions with Chinese students were not an important factor. Scholarship recipients might have more interactions with other scholarship students, or other international students in general, and that this interaction with other international students might have had a stronger influence on their experience in China. This issue is beyond the scope of the current study and is worth further exploration. The revised version of Institutional Integration Scales originally employed in this study did not serve the purpose of this study well.

The emergent model, based on the new scales re-formulated from the Institutional Integration Scales, appeared to be more appropriate for participants of this study.

Implications

The current study has implications for both educational aid donors and recipients. For the Chinese government and receiving Chinese higher institutions, the findings offer insights on aspects that could help improve the effectiveness of the Chinese Government Scholarship Program.

For educational aid donors in general, this current study might suggest alternative ways of providing aid. The vast majority of the scholarship recipients regarded the scholarship program as supportive of development of long-term friendships between China and the scholarship recipients' home countries. This indicates that the scholarship programs have contributed to fostering goodwill toward the Chinese government.

Though most participants were satisfied or fairly satisfied with their experience in China, some aspects were still in need of improvement. Evidence from the current study indicated that 23% of the participants did not feel safe living in China, and 33% did not know how to address and solve logistical problems. It may therefore be worthwhile investigating why some students do not feel safe living in China, what their concerns are, and what problems they might have encountered. Are these issues related to real safety issues on campuses, in China in general, or is the sense of risk caused by misinterpreting behaviors that are different from those in participants' home countries?

A third of the participants were unaware of the proper ways to solve logistical problems. This suggests a weakness in the student services provided. This finding is further supported by the content analysis results in which respondents complained about the attitude and work ethic of student services personnel. It might be beneficial to make the university administrators and student affairs personnel aware of this situation and take measures to strengthen international student consultation and student support.

The implications of this finding go beyond efforts to foster positive feelings among government scholarship students. These findings are also relevant to China's endeavor to attract more self-funded international students. Only recently has the number of students studying in China exceeded the number of Chinese students studying abroad, and the government is hoping to attract an even larger number of international students to study in China (Wang 2006; *China Daily* 2004, 2005). Chinese higher institutions may need better systems to cope with the increasing number of international students.

Another aspect that might need review is the separate living arrangements between international students and Chinese students on Chinese campuses. While this might guarantee international students better living conditions,

separate living arrangements can also hinder scholarship recipients by reducing their opportunities to interact with local students (Langley and Breese 2005). This might be one of the reasons that scholarship recipients' interactions with their Chinese peers did not prove to be an important factor for predicting the participants' level of satisfaction.

Findings will also have some implications for scholarship recipients as to how the benefits of scholarship programs may be maximized, and for educational aid recipient countries as to how they may take advantage of educational aid and use it effectively. Results highlight the importance of awarding scholarships to students who demonstrate a strong commitment to their personal development and who are more likely to devote efforts to their studies in China. Students' personal efforts were the single most important factor in predicting the level of satisfaction and fostering more favorable perceptions towards the scholarship program. These correspond with the previous literature in that the impact of students' time at college is a result of how they exploit their experience (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991) and that students' academic effort is the most important factor in determining international students' success (Lulat and Altbach 1985).

Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of the study relates to the representativeness of the respondent sample. In particular, only Chinese and English languages were used in the study. Scholarship recipients who were unable to communicate in neither Chinese nor English were excluded from the study. Furthermore, the language skills of non-native speakers of Chinese or English were unknown. Some questions might, therefore, not have been clear to some participants. Second, the study was carried out only in Beijing and Shanghai. Though the majority of scholarship recipients are to be found in these two cities, scholarship recipients in other cities might have different experiences and interpretations of the scholarship program as compared with these participants. Third, the number of respondents from each Chinese University may not correspond with the proportion of scholarship recipients in each university. The possibility exists that scholarship recipients from certain institutions are either over-represented or under-represented.

Conclusion

Respondents were generally satisfied with their experience in China and believed that the scholarship program plays a positive role in promoting the development of positive, long-term, friendly relationships between China and their home countries. Findings indicated that the Chinese Government Scholarship Program has been successful in spreading goodwill and strengthening

China's soft power. In short, the Chinese Government Scholarship Program has been an effective mechanism of the ODA.

References

- Beijing to Enroll More Foreign Students. 2004. Retrieved February 24, 2006, from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2004/Feb/86446.htm>.
- Bezlova, Antoaneta. 2005. 50 years Later, A Powerful China Returns to Meet the Bandung Spirit. <http://www.ipsnews.net/africa/interna.asp?idnews=28380>.
- Bobiash, Donald. 1992. *South-South Aid: How Developing Countries Help Each Other*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Chen, Theodore. 1965. Government Encouragement and Control of International Education in Communist China. In: *Governmental Policy and International Education*, ed. by S. Fraser, 111–133. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- China Daily. 2004. China Expects Influx of Foreign Students. Retrieved 14 August, 2006, from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/Life/108458.htm>.
- China Daily. 2005. China Lures Overseas Grads. Retrieved 14 August, 2006, from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/China/129826.htm>.
- China Scholarship Council. 2005. Directory of Institutions and Specialties under Chinese Government Scholarship Program. Retrieved 14 February, 2006, from <http://www.csc.edu.cn/en/readarticle/readarticle.asp?articleid=405>.
- Delaney, Michael. 2006. Chinese Bid to Get Overseas Fee Boost. *Times Higher Education Supplement* (1730), 12.
- Foreign Students Studying in China. 2006. Retrieved 14 August, 2006, from <http://www.chinagate.com.cn/english/2075.htm>.
- French, Howard W. 2005. China Wages Classroom Struggle to Win Friends in Africa [Electronic Version]. *New York Times*, 20 November, 2005. Retrieved 20 November, 2005 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/20/international/asia/20beijing.html?oref=login>.
- Gillespie, Sandra. 2001. *South-South Transfer: A Study of Sino-African Exchanges*. New York: Routledge.
- Goldman, René. 1965. The Experience of Foreign Students in China. In: *Governmental Policy and International Education*, ed. by S. Fraser, 135–140. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Guangming Daily. 2006. Beijingshi shili waiguo xuesheng yu xuezhe jiangxuejing [Beijing Set Up Scholarships for International Students and Scholars]. Retrieved 3 March, 2006, from http://www.gov.cn/banshi/2006-01/25/content_170673.htm.
- Hook, Steven. 1995. *National Interest and Foreign Aid*. Boulder, Colo: L. Rienner Publishers.
- Johnson, Stephen. 2005. Balancing China's Growing Influence in Latin America. *Background*, 1–6.
- Kalima-N'Koma, Mwange. 2004. My Experience at Peking University. *China Today* 53(3): 32.

- Langley, Crolyn S., and Jeffrey R. Breese. 2005. Interacting Sojourners: A Study of Students Studying Abroad. *The Social Science Journal* 42: 313–321.
- Liu, Phillip. 2001. Cross-strait Scramble for Africa: A Hidden Agenda in China-Africa Cooperation Forum [Electronic Version]. *Harvard Asian Quarterly*, V. Retrieved 16 November 2006 from <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~asiactr/haq/200102/0102a006.htm>.
- Lulat, Y. G., and Philip G. Altbach. 1985. International Students in Comparative Perspective: Toward a Political Economy of International Study. In: *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, ed. by J. Smart, Vol. 1, 439–494. New York: Agathon Press, Inc.
- Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. 2000. Measures of Annual Review of Chinese Government Scholarship Status. <http://www.csc.edu.cn/en/readarticle/readarticle.asp?articleid=495>.
- Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. n.d. International Cooperation: International Students in China. http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/international_3.htm.
- Nye, Joseph. 2004. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.
- Pascarella, Ernie T. 1985. College Environmental Influences on Learning and Cognitive Development: A Critical Review and Synthesis. In: *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, ed. by J. Smart, Vol. 1. New York: Agathon Press.
- Pascarella, Ernie, and Patrick Terenzini. 1980. Predicting Freshman Persistence and Voluntary Dropout Decisions from a Theoretical Model. *The Journal of Higher Education* 51(1): 60–75.
- Pascarella, Ernie, and Patrick Terenzini. 1991. *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Pascarella, Ernie, and Patrick Terenzini. 2005. *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Shambaugh, David. 2005a. China's New Diplomacy in Asia. *Foreign Service Journal* (May), 30–38.
- Shambaugh, David. 2005b. Rising Dragon and the American Eagle - Part I [Electronic Version]. *YaleGlobal Online* Retrieved 23 April, 2006 from <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=5601>.
- Shanghai Municipal Education Commission. 2005. Retrieved 3 March, 2006 from http://www.shmec.gov.cn/web/news/show_article.php?article_id=19063.
- Sheppard, Jack. 2004. Jack in China. *China Today* 53: 31.
- Tam, Maureen. 2002. University Impact on Student Growth: A Quality Measure?. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 24(2): 211–218.
- Zhengping Tian, Lang Xiao and Guping Zhou. (eds.). 2004. *Sino-Foreign Educational Exchange History*. Guangzhou, China: Guangdong Education Press.
- Veras, Daniel Bicudo, and Erika Zoeller Veras. 2004. Greatland. *China Today* 53: 30–31.
- Wang, Qian. 2006. China sees Rising Influx of Foreign Students Retrieved 14 August, 2006, from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2006/Jul/174007.htm>.
- Wu, Jing, and Weina Zhen. 2006. Zhongguo zhengfu mingnian jiang tigong 11,000 liuxuesheng jiangxuejin ming'e [The Chinese Government will provide 11,000

International Students with Chinese Government Scholarship Next Year]. Retrieved 16 January, 2007 from http://news.xinhuanet.com/edu/2006-12/21/content_5517742.htm.

Zhang, Xiaohua, Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges Ministry of Education, and the People's Republic of China News Service (ed.). 2003. *Study in China*. Hong Kong, China: Hong Kong China News Service Press.

Zhang, Xiaohua. 2004. "The Little UN" where the Official Language is Chinese. *China Today* 53: 26-29.

The authors

Lili Dong received her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. Her research interests include Sino-foreign educational exchange programs, China's role in international development assistance, development of Chinese higher education, and education for marginalized student population in China.

Contact address: Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA. E-mail: Id239@georgetown.edu

David W. Chapman is the Wallace Professor of Teaching and Learning at the University of Minnesota where he teaches comparative and international education. He has worked in more than 45 developing countries, assisting national governments and international organizations in the areas of educational policy and planning, program design and evaluation. His research focuses on issues of policy implementation and policy effectiveness.

Contact address: University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA. E-mail: chapm026@umn.edu