

The Experiences of Chinese International Students in New Zealand

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

In 2005, Education New Zealand, with funding from the Export Education Industry Development Fund, managed by Education New Zealand and on behalf of the Ministry of Education, commissioned this research project to explore the experiences of Chinese international students in New Zealand.

A national survey of international students published in 2004 identified that Chinese students were more dissatisfied with their experiences in New Zealand when compared to students from Europe, South Africa and North America (ESANA) and other Asian countries. However, this survey also revealed that Chinese students indicated they were likely to apply for permanent residence. These results highlighted an interesting incongruity between students' discontent with New Zealand juxtaposed against a desire to stay here.

This current research attempts to shed some light on the complex experiences and perceptions Chinese international students have about their lives in New Zealand, why they were dissatisfied and their reasons for choosing to stay or return home. Using qualitative approaches it was anticipated that a greater understanding of students' experiences would be uncovered and ways to improve their general wellbeing and satisfaction could be explored.

Methods

A qualitative approach was used for this study using face-to-face interviews and focus groups as the two primary data gathering techniques. Participants were recruited from language schools, private training establishments (PTEs), secondary schools, polytechnics and universities located in Auckland, Hamilton, Rotorua and Christchurch. The four research sites represented communities with high (Auckland and Christchurch), medium (Hamilton) and low (Rotorua) concentrations of Chinese international students. A total of 83 Chinese students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) (46 males and 37 females) with ages ranging from 16 to 33 years volunteered to participate in this study. They were involved in a total of 80 interviews and 4 focus groups that were carried out in either Mandarin or Cantonese.

Major findings

New Zealand as a study destination

- In general, participants expected that an overseas education would give them greater opportunities and better life chances. Parents were the main influence in the decision to study abroad.
- Many students had originally wanted to study in Australia, Canada or the UK but their visa applications had been rejected. New Zealand was then considered because it shares some of the attractions of these popular destinations in that it is an English-speaking country with a western education system. Further, prior to 2003, participants were attracted to study in New Zealand because of cheaper costs, and the relative ease in acquiring a visa.
- Among participants who arrived after 2003, a low exchange rate was rarely mentioned as an important factor in choosing New Zealand. The main reasons given were the quality of education, an amicable environment, immigration opportunities, and having relatives and friends in New Zealand.

- The majority of students knew very little about New Zealand before arrival. The information they did have was obtained from the agents they used or through the internet.
- In general the students looked forward to greater freedom in New Zealand. Other aspects anticipated were a better educational environment, making new friends and learning about different cultures.

Educational experiences and study pathways

- The study plans of most of the participants related to gaining a bachelor or higher degree in New Zealand. Many hoped to stay on in New Zealand to work or apply for residence. Others hoped that an overseas qualification would help them secure employment in the PRC.
- Study plans for most of the participants required adjustment after arrival. The majority of the students required English language study to fulfil the IELTS requirements to enter universities and polytechnics.
- Many of the students under-estimated the time it would take to acquire the appropriate level of English; therefore they spent a much longer period of time in language schools than they had anticipated. This was a significant source of frustration for the students.
- Students offered a range of opinions about their experiences of the different educational sectors they came in contact with – high schools, language schools and tertiary institutions. Most reported being satisfied with the learning environment, in particular the quality of teaching and the approachability of teaching staff, together with the focus on independent learning and students being encouraged to ask questions. However, students also talked about some of the problems they encountered with the education system here, for example – difficulty in attaining adequate English language skills; participating in classroom discussions; working on group projects or assignments that required them to make oral presentations. Some students also voiced concern about the perceived low rating of New Zealand universities compared to those in Australia, Canada and the UK and believed that qualifications gained here would not be valued by employers in the PRC.

Life satisfaction and challenges

Some of the issues most challenging to the Chinese international students in their first three months of arrival were the language barrier, loneliness and difficulties encountered with their homestay accommodation.

- Before coming to New Zealand the participants had anticipated greater personal freedom, especially as they would no longer be under direct parental supervision and control. However, the reality of the situation revealed that students experienced loneliness and hardship, and they also found they could not always count on their parents for help.
- Maintaining a relationship with parents and family in China while living in New Zealand also presented many students with a challenge. While some students reported establishing a closer relationship with parents since arriving here, others detailed a widening gap and lack of contact with family. Many of these students believed that their parents did not understand the problems they encountered here and were reluctant to discuss situations with them.
- Social support networks in New Zealand are significantly different for Chinese international students. They tend to rely on co-nationals or relatives for support and display reluctance seeking help from formal sources of support.

- Not surprisingly, the quality of homestay accommodation impacted on the students' satisfaction levels. Some students' detailed examples of hosts making them feel unwelcome and only interested in having them in the household because of the income they provided, while others spoke of hosts helping them with their studies and language skills and including them in family activities.
- In general, most participants felt more satisfied with life in New Zealand at the time of interview compared to when they first arrived. Of those who were less satisfied, many detailed anxiety about future plans, especially in relation to finding suitable employment either in New Zealand or the PRC. Two-thirds of participants who expressed dissatisfaction with New Zealand both at the time of arrival and when they were interviewed admitted that New Zealand had not been their first choice when it came to a study destination.
- Students who said life was better at the time of interview compared to when they first arrived in New Zealand attributed this change in attitude to doing well in their studies, making friends, enjoying the relaxed lifestyle New Zealand offers, and appreciating the opportunity to study overseas.
- Interaction with domestic students was very limited. Many students spoke of their aspirations prior to arrival in New Zealand of getting to know "Kiwis". In reality this seldom happened and the students tended to socialise, on and off campus, with other Chinese. Many students believed domestic students were not interested in getting to know international students, although there was an appreciation by some of the participants that making friends required input, tolerance and understanding from all sides.

Conclusions and recommendations

The results indicate that there are considerable variations in the background, experiences, and future plans of the Chinese students, and that their evaluations of different aspects of their New Zealand experience (such as education, social relationships, accommodation, and their experience in the city where they reside). The key conclusions are:

- The external environment for international education both in New Zealand and the PRC has changed considerably in recent years. The overall findings suggest that Chinese students who arrived before 2003 were relatively dissatisfied with their experiences when compared to those who came after 2003. Cost and quality were the two key factors influencing choice of study destination.
- While students were generally satisfied with their educational experiences, their study plans were disrupted by inaccurate estimations of the time required to pass IELTS. More guidance in the choice of study pathways was identified as a need for families and prospective students prior to departure.
- Chinese students in tertiary institutions experienced more learning difficulties than those in secondary or language schools. Students were uncertain about future employment prospects both back in the PRC, due to recent increased competition for jobs, and in New Zealand, because of language barriers and a lack of New Zealand work experience.
- Many students experienced loneliness and isolation in the first few months of residence in New Zealand. Students relied considerably more on Chinese friends in New Zealand than their parents back in the PRC. Friendships and intercultural communication with New Zealanders proved difficult because of language and cultural differences. Students also displayed limited knowledge of services; nor did they participate in the wider community.

- Homestay experiences, the major source of accommodation in the initial months, were varied, with negative experiences correlating with low satisfaction. Cost and intercultural issues were reasons students chose flatting, but few were prepared for the hardships created by this choice.
- Chinese students showed inter-city mobility during their stay and also had changed their post study plans, with more indicating the desire to stay and work and seek permanent residence.
- Chinese students' views towards their preferred study destination are also changing.

The following recommendations emerged from this study. These are expanded upon in the full report that follows:

Pre-departure recommendations

1. Before departure, encourage Chinese international students to cherish an international study abroad experience.
2. Provide better preparation to families about the homestay experience, and more accurate information about costs and general living expenses.
3. Provide more information and guidance to help students choose suitable study pathways in New Zealand, especially in relation to the transition from language school to tertiary education.

Recommendations to enhance the quality of the learning experience of Chinese students

4. Develop intercultural responsibility by promoting greater cultural inclusiveness and intercultural interactions in the classroom, including strategies for more effective communication.
5. Provide institutional support for teachers.
6. Promote cultural inclusiveness on campus.
7. Explore the potential for twinning programmes.

Recommendations to enhance Chinese students' living and socio-cultural experiences

8. Improve homestay services to ensure they are a source of social support for young students who are living away from home for the first time.
9. Engage, encourage, and promote Chinese student participation in the wider community.
10. Address issues of safety and protection of students.

Future industry directions

11. Undertake further research into work opportunities for and employment of Chinese graduates in New Zealand.
12. Undertake further research to assist with policy development and planning.

13. Use the media to promote positive images of international students.

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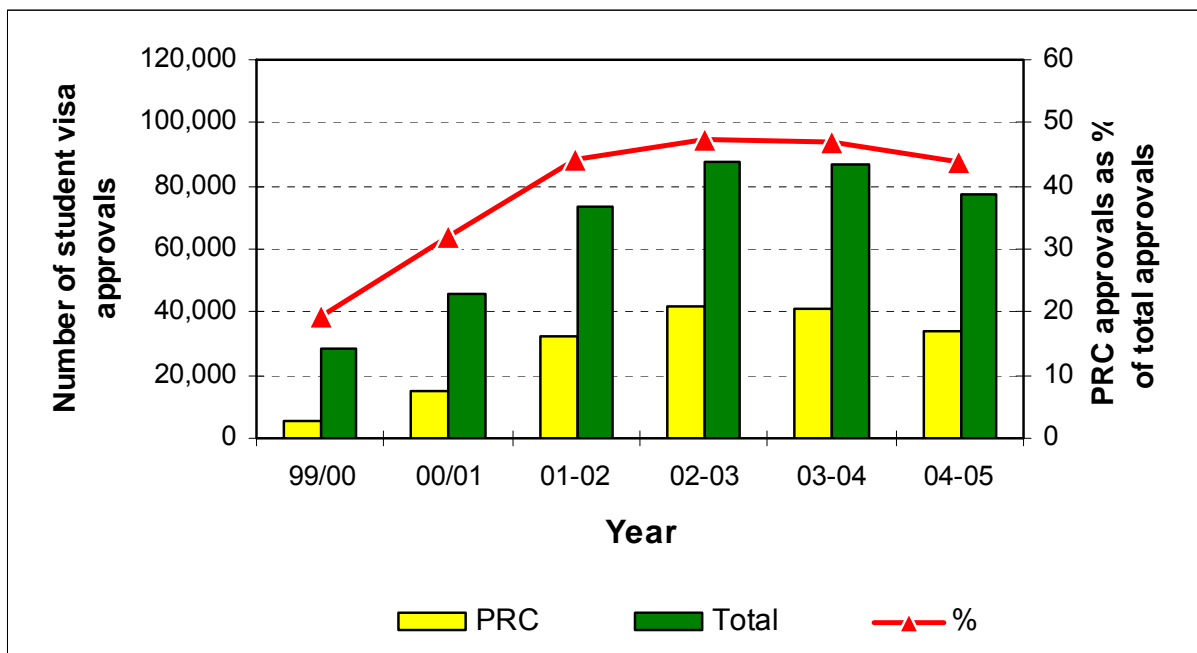
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INTRODUCTION

In 1999 New Zealand lifted the quota on the number of students from the People’s Republic of China (PRC). At the same time New Zealand was endorsed by the PRC as an acceptable education destination. Since then the number of Chinese international students studying in New Zealand has increased dramatically (Asia New Zealand Foundation, 2003; Smith and Rae, 2004). As shown in Figure 1, the number of Chinese nationals granted student visas in New Zealand reached a peak in 2002/03 (with around 41,500 students), accounting for nearly half (47.4%) of the total approvals. Since 2004 there has been a distinct decrease in the number of Chinese students, although the PRC is still the leading source country. In 2004/05, the PRC (with 34,000 students) accounted for 43.9 percent of all student visa approvals (Figure 1).



Source: Department of Labour, 2005

Figure 1 Total number of student visa approvals, and number from the PRC and as a percentage of total approvals, 1999/00 – 2004/05

The dramatic decline in Chinese student numbers since 2004 was commonly attributed to the combination of the rising New Zealand dollar, escalating fees, increased competition from Australia, Canada and the UK, as well as negative media publicity (Aldworth, 2005; Education New Zealand, 2004; O’Rourke, 2005).

In 2004 the Ministry of Education published a national survey of international students. The results drew attention to the need to investigate the experiences of Chinese international students. The survey findings indicated that Chinese students were more dissatisfied with their experiences in New Zealand than students from other Asian countries or Europe, South Africa and North America (ESANA). However, Chinese students were more likely to plan to continue further studies in New Zealand, and indicated they would apply for permanent residence here. The survey also found that Chinese students in language schools and tertiary institutions were less satisfied with their life, educational experiences and academic progress than those in secondary schools. Similarly, the Chinese students residing in Auckland and Christchurch were less satisfied with their life, accommodation and the social support they received than those in the rest of the North and South Islands (Ward & Masgoret, 2004).

These seemingly contradictory results provided “a rather complicated picture of the Chinese student population as relatively more dissatisfied but also more likely to remain in New Zealand” (Ward & Masgoret, 2004: 71). Given that Chinese students represented the largest proportion of international students in New Zealand, the report recommended additional in-depth research with international students from the PRC. Using qualitative approaches it was anticipated that a greater understanding of students’ experiences in New Zealand would be uncovered and ways to improve their general wellbeing and satisfaction could be explored.

In addition to addressing the issues for Chinese students identified in the national survey, undertaking a research project to provide understanding of Chinese students’ aspirations and future plans has implications for immigration policies and the export education industry. In recent years, as New Zealand has continued to shift towards a knowledge-based economy, one of the predominant issues facing the country has been our ability to attract and retain talented people as a means of encouraging economic growth (Bedford, Ho & Lidgard, 2005). International students, who have New Zealand qualifications and experience of living in the country, are a source of potential talent that could address the issue of skill shortages. Around the world more and more industrialised countries have introduced policies that encourage international students to stay and work and eventually settle in their host country (Suter & Jandl, 2006). But little research has been undertaken to find out, from the students’ point of view, why they decide to stay or return after completion of their studies.

Objectives of the research

This research project was commissioned by Education New Zealand in 2005 to investigate the experiences of Chinese international students. Its objectives are to:

1. explore Chinese international students’ learning expectations, perceptions and experiences, accommodation and homestay arrangements, friendship making, pastoral care and welfare issues, community support and future plans;
2. identify the fundamental causes of Chinese students’ dissatisfaction with their experiences in New Zealand;
3. explore factors influencing Chinese students’ intentions to remain in New Zealand after completion of their current studies; and
4. propose practical solutions to the problems identified by the research.

A brief overview of some issues related to Chinese studying abroad

As a starting point for this research some articles posted on the internet in the PRC were reviewed to identify issues of concern related to studying abroad. The internet was used to provide background information for this project because in the Ministry of Education’s national survey on international students, the internet was considered by the participants as more influential than advertisements and direct approaches in making their decision to study in New Zealand (Ward & Masgoret, 2004). We searched 10 websites commonly accessed by students intending to study abroad, and reviewed over 50 articles posted (between 2000-2005) on these websites that discussed various concerns about studying in New Zealand (see Appendix 1 for selected article references). In addition, we located articles published in New Zealand Chinese language newspapers about international students’ study experiences and their concerns about returning home. These issues are briefly discussed below.

Choosing New Zealand as an overseas study destination

In 2001, it was estimated that there were between 460,000 and 500,000 students from the PRC studying abroad, with over half (52.8%) in the USA (Zhang, 2003, cited in Suter & Jandl, 2006). At the same time, New Zealand had become a new overseas study destination for Chinese students. Our

internet search on Chinese websites found many articles posted between 2000 and 2002 that explored the pros and cons of studying in New Zealand (Appendix 1.1).

Overall there were more articles discussing the “pros” than the “cons” during this period. Reasons for promoting New Zealand as an overseas study destination included: being an English speaking country, good education system, excellent study environment, political stability, safety, and good weather. Similarly, less expensive fees and living costs, and ease of obtaining a visa – especially in relation to no IELTS (International English Language Testing System) requirement for student visas, were often highlighted as advantages of choosing New Zealand compared with other English speaking overseas study destinations such as Australia, Canada and the UK. Articles that explored the “cons” gave reasons such as poor job opportunities for Chinese students, inconvenient public transport system, boredom and low ratings of New Zealand universities.

More recently some articles discuss the claim that, among Commonwealth countries, New Zealand has one of the lowest admission requirements for international students. An article entitled “*A general discussion: Walk out from the misrepresented areas of overseas study in New Zealand*” (“*综述：走出留学新西兰的误区*”，2003) refuted this claim and pointed out how this misperception had led many Chinese students to believe that they would not need IELTS to enter a university if they were granted a student visa. Another article entitled “*A zero distance sensation: An overview of New Zealand education*” (“*零距离感受：新西兰教育全面观*”，2004) looked at different study pathways undertaken by Chinese students in New Zealand, and stressed that good IELTS results are essential for admission to universities.

Overseas study experiences in New Zealand

During our internet search we found some stories written by Chinese international students themselves about their overseas study experiences in New Zealand (Appendix 1.2). For example, in an article entitled “*The experiences of overseas study in New Zealand by a seventeen year old secondary school student*” (“*17岁中学生感受新西兰留学*”，2001), the author reflected on the novelty of being a student in New Zealand as well as different teaching styles among teachers. The other stories were about international students’ general living experiences and how they learned to solve daily living problems in their new environment.

We also found some articles that exposed the lives of some international students who had gone astray. In “*The true life of ‘rich kids’ in New Zealand*”, (“*新西兰中富家子弟的真实生活*”，2004), and “*Witness the peculiarity of Chinese overseas students in New Zealand*”, (“*目睹新西兰中国留学生之怪现状*”), some international students were portrayed as extremely extravagant. Instead of studying, they spent all their time gambling, boy-racing, or even being involved in prostitution, drug addiction and gang activities. In “*A New Zealand story – Is PR really so important to female students?*” (“*新西兰的故事 — PR对女生来说真的这么重要?*”，2005), a story was told about an international student’s relationship with her “Kiwi” boyfriend, and her intention to gain permanent residence for the purpose of paying the much lower local student fees.

International student policies and news

In 2003, the number of Chinese international students studying in New Zealand began to decline. This, together with the closing down of two private language schools and media reports of car accidents, kidnaps and murder cases involving Chinese students, had provoked considerable discussion on the Chinese websites (Appendix 1.3). One area of concern was about how Chinese students could better prepare themselves before going abroad. In an article entitled “*Overseas study in New Zealand cools down. Intelligent analysis on pros and cons of overseas study and cautious assessment of good schools*” (“*新西兰留学降温，理性分析出国利弊 谨慎判断学校*”，2003), information on the New Zealand education system was provided to help intending students choose their study pathways. As many Chinese students commenced their New Zealand study in language schools, some articles

urged intending students to carefully consider the quality of private language schools before enrolling. Further, proper arrangement of homestay services prior to departure was also considered important.

Another area of concern was about strengthening the protection of international students. The revised *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students* (Ministry of Education, 2003), and subsequent changes to student policies which offered more protection for students in private training establishments, were some measures that had attracted positive feedback in the Chinese articles.

Responses to the “Overseas study rubbish” article

In 2003 a newspaper article entitled “*Overseas study rubbish*” (“留学垃圾”), written by a journalist in the PRC, generated considerable discussion on the Chinese websites. The journalist visited Japan and Germany for three months to study the lives of Chinese students in the two countries. His report highlighted a range of problems found amongst overseas students, including prostitution, gambling, drug addiction, illegal immigration and even criminal activities. Our internet search found many articles written in response to the “Overseas study rubbish” article (Appendix 1.4) and some of the Chinese international students who participated in this study introduced to us a lyric entitled “*Overseas study rubbish*”. The English translation of this lyric is presented on page 5.

The articles suggested that some of the problems identified in the “*Overseas study rubbish*” article were found amongst Chinese fee-paying students in New Zealand. In particular, students who were newly arrived or who went abroad in their teens were particularly vulnerable. In an article entitled “*Survival report of young Chinese overseas students: We are not ‘overseas study rubbish’*” (“中国小留学生生存报告：我们不是留学垃圾”), many of the teenage international students interviewed told of their feelings of loneliness and estrangement when they first arrived in New Zealand. They also had a strong sense of loss arising from being separated from their parents and friends and had struggled in the process of learning to be independent. However, they thought only a small proportion of overseas students were at risk of getting into trouble. They were concerned that the term “Overseas study rubbish” must not be used to stereotype them.

Issues related to returning home

In contemporary Chinese middle-class families, providing an overseas education for their children is “part of a wider strategy of household capital accumulation” (Waters, 2005: 370). Students go abroad expecting to acquire overseas credentials that will enhance the overall status of the family and give them a better future. In the PRC, the returnees are popularly known as “returning sea turtles”¹ (“海龟”), because they are seen to possess valuable skills, such as information and networks that are generally unavailable to people who have not gone overseas (Zweig, 2006). Recently, however, many returnees have been unable to find a job back home. These people have become “sea lingerers”² (“海待”), lingering around and looking for jobs. The change in perception of the “value” of overseas credentials is an emerging issue explored in some recent articles (see Appendix 1.5). For example, in an article entitled “*Voice of ‘returning sea turtles’: When will we find our orientation back in China?*” (“海归心声：什么时候才能在国内找到方向? ”, 2006), the author advised returnees to be realistic about their expectations when they look for jobs back home.

¹ The Chinese word “return” sounds the same as the word “turtle”.

² The Chinese word “linger” implies the meaning of waiting and having nothing to do.

Lyric: Overseas Study Rubbish (Translation)

In the final year of the 20th century
I came to the legendary "overseas".
Located in New Zealand the so called most prosperous big city
Named: Auckland.
Here the scenery is beautiful, and the air is fresh.
Even the sky is as blue as the foreign devils³ eyeballs,
But
And yet I find here more of a peasants', a bumpkins' wonderland.
No high rise
Hardly any tall buildings
Urbanization is not even up to my hometown some 10 years ago,
In fact I know
It takes a little time to understand
Perhaps their passion is on the rural nature.

To say that time flies is actually right
With a blink of the eye we come to the crucial point of issue
Only after a couple of months
The situation turns sharply
The once rare oriental floods the place
Please take a careful look at the Queen's Street
Asian faces jump up tremendously to 80%,
Three fifths from Mainland China
And one fifth from Hong Kong and Taiwan,
Gradually the foreign devils are no longer friendly
The dirty middle finger pointing frequently to us
The once warm and close "Welcome my friend"
Becomes the low and mean "**** you Asian".

Gambling
Karaoke
Disco dancing
Seem not much of a problem doing so
Yet these fellows have so much money
That they can spend as much as they want.
So there come the scary kidnaps
Stirring whirlpools of fright
Storming the city in disorder.
To all snaky big brothers
We are all Chinese by blood
Why are you burning them with our same root?

There are these low mentality media writing "shit"
Collectively named us the so called "overseas study rubbish".
I doubted very much if your eyes are only used for breathing?
The "rubbish" refers only to a few individuals
How can it represent the collective body of all overseas students?
Irresponsible media organization like you
Had better close down asap
For those brothers and sisters who still wish to stand out
I plead you to behave
Though you *** yourself don't mind your face,
You recklessly ruin the whole of our NZ Chinese name.
You know what you have done leaves you not a name
It's us, the first class good overseas students who suffer bitterly!

³ "Foreign devil" is a Chinese slang for foreigners.

The above overview sets the context for this research. Over the six years covered in this review (2000-2005), Chinese views towards New Zealand as an overseas study destination have changed considerably. Prior to 2003 the views were predominantly positive and New Zealand was regarded as one of the PRC's overseas study hotspots. From 2003 this perception has changed. One area of concern is about institutional capacity, the management and protection of students, particularly following the closing down of two language schools. Further, there are concerns about safety issues and host reception of international students, and these concerns are particularly strong in centres with high concentrations of Chinese students. There are also concerns directed towards Chinese international students themselves, for example, in the area of improving social integration. Over the six years the Chinese have also placed more emphasis on the "quality" of overseas credentials. Returning students are finding themselves in a much more competitive job market than previously experienced, where acquiring overseas qualifications does not necessarily promise them a job or higher salaries than those who have not gone abroad.

Structure of the report

The remainder of this report is structured into five chapters. Chapter Two outlines the research methodology and includes a description of the research participants' characteristics. The main findings are presented in three chapters. Chapter Three sets out Chinese students' educational expectations, study pathways and learning experiences. Chapter Four examines the daily living experiences of the Chinese students and the sources of their dissatisfaction with New Zealand life. The residential preferences and post-study plans of the students are explored in Chapter Five. In the final chapter, the Ministry of Education's national survey findings are re-examined in light of the results of this project, and some suggestions made for improving the satisfaction and general wellbeing of Chinese international students.

METHODS

A qualitative approach was used for this study using face-to-face interviews and focus groups as the two primary data gathering techniques. The field research was carried out between February and September 2006. This chapter describes the characteristics of research participants and identifies ethical issues for the research; it outlines development of the interview guide and focus group questions; and finally, considers data collection and analysis procedures.

Research participants

Potential research participants were the PRC Chinese international students from language schools, private training establishments (PTEs), secondary schools, polytechnics and universities located in Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton and Rotorua. The four research sites represented communities with high (Auckland and Christchurch), medium (Hamilton) and low (Rotorua) concentrations of Chinese international students. Participants from at least two sectors or levels of the education system were represented at each research site. Participation in the study was voluntary.

A total of 83 Chinese students from the PRC (46 males and 37 females) participated in this research (Table 1 and Appendix 2). Their ages ranged from 16 to 33 years. The mean age was 22.3 years. The participants arrived in New Zealand as international students between 1999 and 2006. Nearly half (45.8%) arrived before 2003.

Half of the participants (50.6%) lived in communities with a high concentration of Chinese international students (26 in Auckland and 16 in Christchurch). In addition, 30 (35.1%) lived in Hamilton and 11 (13.3%) lived in Rotorua.

Nineteen participants (22.9%) were enrolled in language schools and PTEs at the time of the interview. Twelve (14.5%) were enrolled in secondary schools, 15 (18.1%) at polytechnics and 37 (44.6%) in universities. Twenty-six participants (31.3%) were in paid employment.

Fifty participants (60.2%) were flatting with friends at the time of the interview. Seventeen (20.5%) lived with homestay families and 11 (13.3%) were boarding (6 with Chinese families; the other 5 unknown). Three (3.6%) lived in relatives' homes, one (1.2%) lived in a student hostel and one (1.2%) lived in accommodation provided by her employer (Table 1).

The participants were from a diverse range of cities and provinces in the PRC prior to arrival in New Zealand (Figure 2). The majority were from Guangdong (22), Shanghai (13), Fujian (7) and Tianjing (6).

Table 1 Characteristics of research participants

	Auckland	Christchurch	Hamilton	Rotorua	TOTAL
GENDER					
Male	17	9	16	4	46
Female	9	7	14	7	37
Total	26	16	30	11	83
AGE					
16-19	11	1	0	5	17
20-24	9	13	22	6	50
25-29	3	2	8	0	13
30-34	3	0	0	0	3
<i>Mean Age</i>	<i>21.5</i>	<i>22.6</i>	<i>23.7</i>	<i>20.4</i>	<i>22.3</i>
YEAR OF ARRIVAL					
1999	2	0	0	0	2
2000	0	1	1	0	2
2001	2	6	6	0	14
2002	2	6	10	2	20
2003	2	2	6	1	11
2004	5	1	1	0	7
2005	9	0	4	6	19
2006	4	0	2	2	8
SECTOR STUDIED IN					
Language school	8	0	0	5	13
PTE	5	0	1	0	6
Secondary school	7	3	0	2	12
Polytechnic	2	0	9	4	15
University	4	13	20	0	37
ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENT					
Flatting	8	13	25	4	50
Homestay	11	0	1	5	17
Boarding	4	3	4	0	11
Hostel	1	0	0	0	1
Relative's home	2	0	0	1	3
Other	0	0	0	1	1
WORK IN NZ					
Yes	5	6	12	3	26
No	21	10	18	8	57

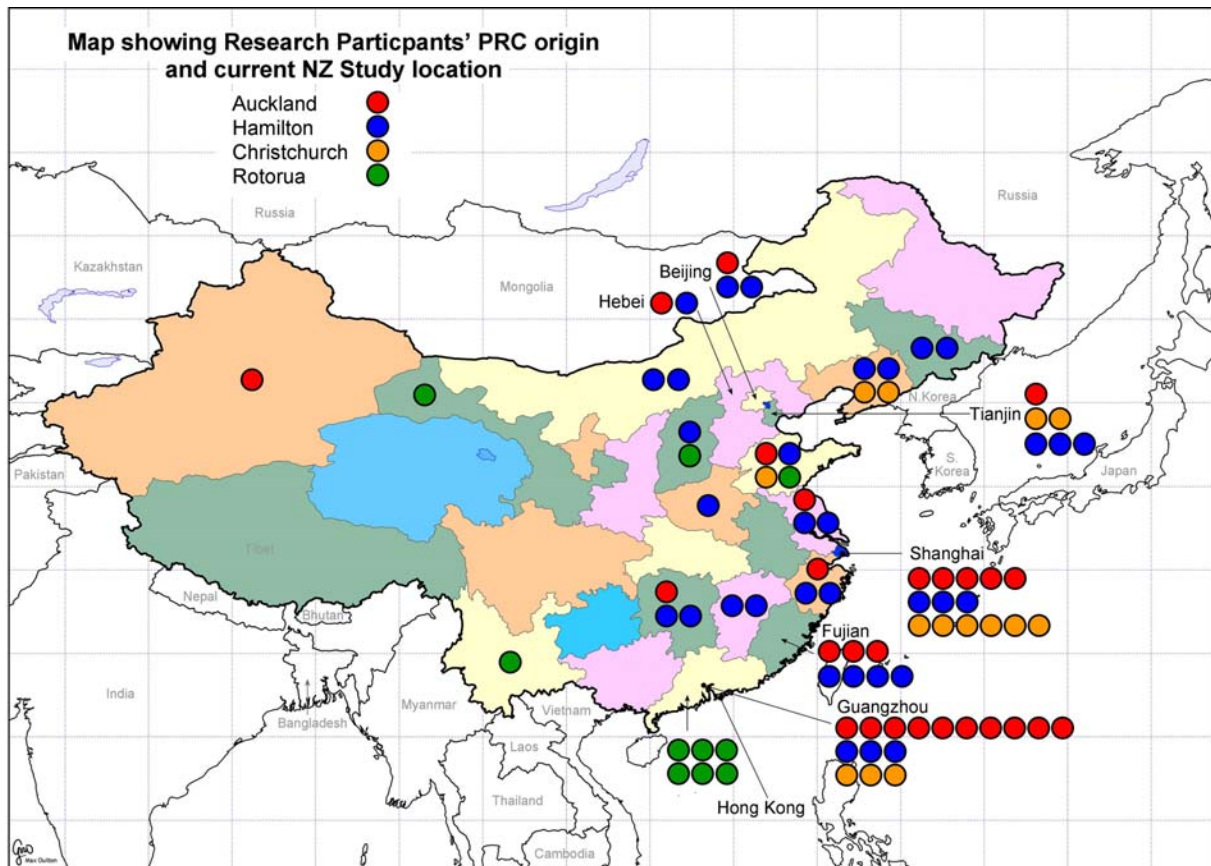


Figure 2 Research participants' PRC origin and current New Zealand study location

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval from the University of Waikato's Human Research Ethics Committee was obtained prior to conducting interviews and focus groups. Information sheets, written in English and Chinese, were provided for potential participants (Appendices 3 and 4). The information sheet described the background of the study and the rights of the participants. Individuals who consented to participate in the study were contacted and an interview arranged.

Participants signed a consent form (Appendices 5 and 6) before the commencement of interviews and focus groups. They were alerted to their rights and assured that these would be protected during all phases of the study. Elements of the informed consent included the following:

- the purpose of the study, so that individuals understood the nature of the research and its likely impact on them;
- the procedures of the study, so that individuals could reasonably anticipate what to expect in the research;
- the right to participate voluntarily and the right to withdraw at any time, so that an individual would not feel coerced into participation;
- the right to ask questions, and have their privacy protected;
- the right to decline to answer any particular question;
- the right to decline audio-taping of the interview; and
- the overall benefits of the study (Creswell, 2003).

The participants were assured of anonymity and that names or any identifying information would not be used in the report unless permission was sought from the individual.

The interview guide

An interview guide (Appendix 7) and a Personal Data Sheet (Appendices 8 and 9) were developed in consultation with the research levy reference group. The semi-structured interview guide was designed to ensure consistency of information, but it was sufficiently open-ended to allow participants an opportunity to offer viewpoints they thought important. The interview guide was pilot tested by the research assistant for clarity and cultural appropriateness. It covered six key information areas to be addressed in this research.

1. Pre-arrival expectations

The first section focused on pre-arrival expectations. The types of questions included in this section were:

- What were the reasons for choosing New Zealand as a study destination?
- Was New Zealand your first choice as a place of study?
- Looking back, what are the three most important things you should consider in choosing a study destination?
- Before coming to New Zealand, what perception did you have of studying in New Zealand? What were the things you looked forward to doing?
- Before coming to New Zealand, how many years did you plan to stay in New Zealand? What was the highest qualification you expected to get? Did you plan to look for jobs in New Zealand after finishing your studies? Did you plan to apply for permanent residency?

2. Feelings on quality of life in New Zealand

In order to obtain an impression of how happy the participants were at the time of interview and whether they were feeling more content than when they first arrived, all participants were shown a picture of a ladder with ten rungs and asked to indicate which of the rungs they felt they were currently standing on. The top of the ladder, rung ten, represented the best possible life for them and the bottom of the ladder, rung one, the worst possible life. They were then asked which rung of the ladder they thought they had been on during their first three months in New Zealand. The answers to these two questions were used to explore whether the participants felt that their life was better or worse than they remembered it had been at the time of arrival in New Zealand. In addition, the participants were asked to reflect whether there was a time in New Zealand that they thought they were at the very bottom of the ladder. They were also asked if they liked living in the city where they currently lived (i.e. Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton or Rotorua), and whether they would nominate that city as a place to study and live in if they were free to choose again.

3. Accommodation arrangements

In this section, participants were asked to describe their current living arrangement (e.g. homestay, flatting, boarding, hostel) and how happy they were with their accommodation. If the participants had previously lived in other types of accommodation, they were also asked to identify the things they liked or disliked about the different types of accommodation they had experienced.

4. Educational experiences

In this section, participants' study experiences in New Zealand were explored by investigating their attitudes towards New Zealand's educational system, the teaching and learning programmes, and their relationships with teachers and students. We also explored whether they had experienced difficulties in specific educational activities such as writing assignments, working on group projects, and asking questions in class, as well as feeling comfortable about utilising the educational support services available (e.g. International Student Office, Student orientation services, language laboratories).

5. Community and social support

The support networks of participants both in New Zealand and back home were explored. Questions included asking participants to indicate the people who they could count on for help or support in a range of activities (e.g. talk with them if they were upset or troubled; comfort them when they were lonely or homesick; help them when they were sick; discuss relationship issues with them). Participants' use of community support services, their relationship with parents, and how often they would turn to their parents for help or support were additional topics explored in this section.

6. Future plans, suggestions and recommendations

In the final section of the interview guide, participants were asked to reflect on their pre-arrival expectations, and consider if their study plan, and their intentions to work or residence in New Zealand had changed since coming to New Zealand. Following this, the "overseas study refuse" article and the downturn of Chinese student numbers since 2003 were used as discussion topics to encourage participants to give suggestions on the following:

- improving New Zealand's reputation as an overseas study destination for Chinese students;
- improving New Zealanders' perceptions of Chinese students;
- improving social integration of Chinese students in New Zealand schools and society; and
- improving educational, pastoral and community support services for international students.

7. Personal Data Sheet

A Personal Data Sheet (Appendices 8 and 9) was designed to provide general demographic information about the participants--such as their age, gender, year of arrival in New Zealand as international student, and their current study programme. The participants completed this documentation prior to the interviews being held.

Focus group questions

Four sets of focus group questions (Appendices 10 – 13) were developed after preliminary findings from the face-to-face interviews were analysed. They were designed to further explore some of the themes identified in the face-to-face interviews. The following themes provided a basis for discussions in the focus groups.

1. Choosing New Zealand

Focus group participants were asked to discuss the pros and cons of studying in New Zealand, in terms of its education quality, costs, living environment, safety, future work prospects in New Zealand, the PRC and elsewhere, and other concerns. The questions were designed to reveal mismatched expectations. This related to the views participants held prior to coming to New Zealand, compared to those gained after spending some time here.

2. The first three months in New Zealand

Participants reflected on their positive and negative experiences in the first three months. They were encouraged to discuss the types of support they considered useful during this period, such as from homestay families, teachers and other staff in the educational institution they were enrolled in at that time, local communities, their parents, and any other sources, both in New Zealand and in the PRC.

3. Learning English and the IELTS

Participants reflected on the difficulties and challenges of learning English in New Zealand. Their experiences with the IELTS were explored in-depth, including failure, and how this affected their study plans.

4. Study pathways

Participants reflected on the difficulties and challenges relating to the transition from language schools to tertiary institutions. The experiences of some participants enrolling in twinning (2+2) programmes were also explored.

5. Plans after completion of studies

The participants' plans, in terms of where to find work and whether or not to apply for residency in New Zealand, were explored. Questions about the difficulties and challenges of finding a job related to their field of study in either New Zealand or the PRC were examined, and whether this had resulted in students changing their plans.

6. Attitudes towards the city in which they studied

Focus group participants in each research site were asked to describe why these chose the particular city they had studied in. Further, they were asked whether they would nominate the same city to study, work or live again if they were free to choose.

Data collection and analysis

A total of 80 interviews and four focus groups were conducted between February and September 2006. Participants were recruited from Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton and Rotorua using a snowball technique, and with assistance from educational institutions and Chinese communities in each site. Appendix 2 gives the background characteristics of participants across the four centres. To ensure anonymity of participants, the names of the institutions and organisations that helped us locate research participants are not provided in this report.

All of the interviews and focus groups were conducted in the participants' first language by the second author of this report who spoke fluent Mandarin and Cantonese. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then analysed to elicit emergent themes. These themes were further explored in the focus groups, which involved 17 of the 80 interview participants, and three new members who had lived in New Zealand for less than one year. Each focus group was designed to explore two to three themes that emerged from the preliminary findings. This process helped validate the emerging themes and allow further comparison of findings across cities and sectors.

EXPECTATIONS, STUDY PATHWAYS AND EXPERIENCES

This chapter examines the educational experiences of 80 PRC Chinese international students⁴ who came to New Zealand between 1999 and 2006. During this period the environment for international students both in New Zealand and in the PRC changed considerably. This chapter begins by examining the reasoning behind Chinese students' decisions to study in New Zealand, including the impressions they had of New Zealand and their study plans. The second section examines the study pathways these students followed after their arrival, and whether these pathways differed from their original plans. The issues and challenges faced by these students are explored in section three. The chapter concludes by discussing some practical implications for institutions and the export education industry.

Choosing New Zealand: Reasons, impressions and plans

During the in-depth interviews, over half the participants stated that the idea of studying abroad originated from their parents. Other than parents, the decision to study overseas was also influenced by friends, teachers, and relatives. In general, the participants expected that an overseas education would give them greater opportunities and better life chances. Some students said they were motivated to study overseas in order to escape the pressure of examinations in the PRC.

My parents have travelled abroad and encountered people working in foreign enterprises. They find that they are as capable as these people, only that they can't speak English, which hinders them from doing a lot of things. This is why they want me to study overseas. (#15)

Overseas diplomas and qualifications are more valuable. (#32)

Mainly want to see the world abroad. (#18)

The advantages [of studying abroad] are, firstly, to be bilingual, secondly, to acquire more knowledge and thirdly, to see if we can learn more under the western education system which is quite different from that of China. (#15)

I had worked in China for six years with not much progress. I wanted to see if there could be any new development for me overseas. I also wanted to change my job. (#52)

I didn't do well in my university entrance exam so I came. (#11)

However, only 9 out of 38 participants (23.7%) who arrived before 2003 indicated that New Zealand was their first choice of an overseas study destination (Table 2). Many had originally wanted to study in Australia, Canada or the UK but their visa applications had been rejected. New Zealand was then considered because it shares some of the attractions of these popular destinations in that it is an English-speaking country with a western education system. Further, prior to 2003, participants were attracted to studying in New Zealand because of cheaper costs, and relative ease in getting a visa.

I planned on going to UK and had made some preparation. But my visa application was rejected. I still wished to come out so I found an agent in Beijing. He told me that the success

⁴ The main findings presented in Chapters 3 to 5 have been drawn from in-depth interviews of 80 the PRC Chinese international students. Three additional students who contributed their views in focus group discussions only have not been included in the main analysis because no detailed information about their background and conditions of living and learning in New Zealand was obtained.

rate for coming to NZ was high. At that time, the prevailing exchange rate was relatively low and school fees and other expenses were cheap. So I chose NZ. (#52, arrived in 2002)

When we came, NZ was an overseas study hot spot. The prevailing exchange rate was low. And it's an English education system. In the words of a popular advertisement: "Low fees, English education, Beautiful scenery!" (Hamilton FG).

I decided to come to NZ because fees and charges are cheaper, and it is safer here. ... Before I came, I gathered a lot of NZ information from friends and from the internet. I found NZ better because unlike other countries, there are not so many "diploma mills" (lousy universities). (#18, arrived in 2002)

The exchange rate was very low in year 2000, so my parents sent me out. Dad wanted to send me to UK but its fees were high. So we chose this cheaper place to learn English. Moreover, NZ doesn't require IELTS results. (#48, arrived in 2000)

Choosing NZ because it's an English speaking country. Another reason is that its expenses are relatively low, and it's easier to get a visa as there is no need to go through IELTS. (#11, arrived in 2002)

Among participants who arrived after 2003, a low exchange rate was rarely mentioned as an important factor in choosing New Zealand. The main reasons given were the quality of education, an amicable environment, immigration opportunities, and having relatives and friends in New Zealand. As Table 2 shows, a larger proportion of participants who came after 2003 (45.2%, compared with 23.7% for participants who came before 2003) indicated that New Zealand was their first choice of study destination.

My parents made the decision to send me for overseas study. They considered the weather and other conditions, and found that NZ was comparatively desirable. NZ was the first choice as the weather is good, there are many Chinese here and the environment is amicable. (#33, arrived in 2003)

NZ has beautiful scenery. We can travel over holidays. Its natural geography has a great edge over others. (Hamilton FG)

The holistic and complete education system is an advantage, though its ranking may not be as high as other countries. (Hamilton FG)

The main reason that I came is because of the new policy in 2006. For overseas students studying for a doctorate, there will be a concessionary treatment. My target is to read for a PhD. (#40, arrived in 2006).

Table 2 First choice of study destination by year of arrival in New Zealand

First choice study destination	Arrived before 2003		Arrived after 2003		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
New Zealand	9	23.7	19	45.2	28	35.0
Australia	9	23.7	5	11.9	14	17.5
Canada	7	18.4	7	16.7	14	17.5
UK	6	15.8	6	14.3	12	15.0
Other	7	18.4	5	11.9	12	15.0
Total	38	100	42	100	80	100

Impressions of New Zealand before arrival

Only one participant had visited New Zealand before making the decision to study here. In the main, the majority of students obtained information about New Zealand from the agents they used (77.2%) or through the internet (53.2%). Information sought was primarily about the study programmes (82.5%), the living environment (75%), and the weather (53.8%). Seven (8.8%) indicated that they had made no effort at all to obtain information about New Zealand because their parents arranged everything for them. Overall, most participants knew very little about New Zealand before arrival.

[Before I came] I have no concept about NZ environment and weather. I only knew that the four seasons in NZ are opposite from ours. (#06)

Before I came, I thought the weather was quite good, the environment was green and amicable. (#15)

Before coming over, I know NZ is famous for its natural environment, hills are green and waters are blue. It's more like a holiday or retirement place. The air is fresh and the temperature difference is small. (#21)

Despite limited preparations in relation to studying abroad, many participants looked forward to having the freedom “to do things which I can't do in China” (#21). The things that participants considered they could do in New Zealand but not in China included: driving (27.5%), living away from parents (23.8%), part-time work (18.8%), gambling (6.3%), cohabitation (6.3%), and playing truant (6.3%).

As a student, things that we can do in NZ but not in China are: driving a car to wherever we like, especially to the countryside and the forest. (#29)

What we can do in NZ is be independent, rent a place, drive a car and meet people from various countries. (#34)

My biggest dream is to leave my guardians and be free, to do whatever I want to do. My family used to be too strict with me. (#33)

More freedom is what I have here and have not in China. I can go to work. It's because I am far away from my parents and nobody is supervising me. (#21)

What I can do in NZ is go out with boys and help each other, which makes me independent. (#35)

Other things participants looked forward to in New Zealand included: a better educational environment (15%), making new friends (5%), and learning more about different cultures (5%).

What we can do in NZ but not in China is to express ourselves freely in lectures. We can challenge our teachers, which is not possible in China. (#47)

Before I came, I dreamt of attending high quality schools, making friends with many foreigners, learning about different cultures and settling in the community. (#06)

I am eager to learn more about the living environment and the culture of NZ. The living pressure in China is greater than here. The NZ social environment is stable, peaceful and

harmonious. It's a place where you can enjoy your golden (old) age. You can relax and put your mind at ease here. (#12)

Study plans

Before they arrived, the majority of participants (80%) aspired to obtain a bachelor or higher degree in New Zealand. Thirteen (16.3%) planned to study for a diploma. Only three (3.8%) did not have a definite study plan before they came. Other than gaining an academic qualification, many participants also planned to stay in New Zealand to work (53.8%), and some intended to apply for residence (42.5%) after completing their studies.

I want to study. And my parents want it too. They hope I can obtain academic qualifications as high as possible. (Christchurch FG)

Before I came to NZ, I planned to study in a language school for three months, and hoped to get a bachelor degree. I also wanted to stay behind to work and applied for citizenship. It's because I find NZ has a good welfare policy and a good environment with political stability. (#9)

I will pursue my study if I can. My anticipating qualification is a bachelor degree. I want to find a job overseas. I have thought about applying for permanent residence here. In this way, I can develop myself both in NZ and in China. (#36)

My original plan is to spend the shortest time in a language school and then transfer to a good university. To graduate speedily, find a job and settle for citizenship. The highest expected qualification is a bachelor degree. (#47)

The original plan, taking at least five years (two years high school, three years university), is to obtain a bachelor degree. Have thought about finding a job after graduation, also thought about getting permanent residence. It's not easy for overseas students to go back to China and get a job. (#21)

However, not all participants planned to stay in New Zealand after finishing their studies. Many planned to return home to work, hoping that an overseas qualification would increase their chance of securing a better job in the PRC.

What I most longed for was to learn more from overseas and then go back home to work. (#51)

Study pathways

In this section the study pathways the participants took after they arrived in New Zealand are examined in order to ascertain if pre-arrival plans altered after arrival in New Zealand. As mentioned above, prior to arrival eighty percent of the students envisaged studying towards a bachelor or higher degree once in New Zealand. Following their arrival here, it is evident that an even greater percentage of participants (96%) believed that they would undertake tertiary education. However, of the 80 participants who planned to obtain a degree or a diploma in New Zealand, only four (5%) were able to enter into a university on arrival⁵, and one (1.3%) first enrolled in a polytechnic⁶ (Table 3). Over three-quarters (77.5%) commenced study in New Zealand in a language school, twelve (15%) in a high school, and one (1.3) in a PTE (Table 3).

⁵ These participants enrolled in a twinning (2+2) programme and had completed two years of university studies in the PRC before arrival.

⁶ This participant had degree aspirations. He subsequently completed a diploma in the polytechnic and entered a university.

The number of sectors participants had enrolled in since arrival is also shown in Table 3. Nearly three-quarters (73.8%) had enrolled in two or more sectors. The study pathways undertaken by the 80 participants are presented in Table 4.

Table 3 Sector first enrolled on arrival, and number of sectors enrolled since arrival

Sector	Sector first enrolled on arrival		Number of sectors enrolled since arrival		
	Number	Percent	One	Two	Three
Language school	62	77.5	13	44	5
PTE	1	1.3	0	1	0
High school	12	15.0	4	8	0
Polytechnic	1	1.3	0	1	0
University	4	5.0	4	0	0
Total	80	100	21	54	5

Table 4 Study pathways, expected length of time in New Zealand, and actual time spent in language school and in New Zealand

Study pathway	Number of students	Percent of all students	Expected length of time in NZ*	Time lived in NZ**	Time studied in language school**
Single sector					
Language school	13	16.3	45 months	7 months	7 months
High school	4	5.0	66 months	16 months	NA
University	4	5.0	24 months	16 months	NA
Multiple sectors					
Language School – University	25	31.3	50 months	46 months	15 months
Language School – Polytechnic	11	13.8	48 months	42 months	14 months
Language School – PTE	4	5.0	34 months	31 months	14 months
Language School - High School	4	5.0	--	27 months	7 months
Language School - High School – University	5	6.3	48 months	42 months	9 months
High School – University	3	3.7	49 months	65 months	NA
High School - Polytechnic	3	3.7	48 months	46 months	NA
High School - PTE	2	2.5	36 months	63 months	NA
PTE – University	1	1.2	36 months	46 months	NA
Polytechnic – University	1	1.2	--	38 months	NA
Total	80	100	46 months	35 months	

* Average time (in months) the participants planned to complete their studies in New Zealand before they arrived. Figures are not shown when over one-third of the participants who took a particular pathway said they were unsure of the amount of time they expected to complete their studies in New Zealand.

** Average time (in months) the participants had actually lived in New Zealand or studied in a language school at the time of survey.

At the time of survey, 21 participants were studying in the sector that they first enrolled in on arrival—13 of the “single sector” students were enrolled in language schools, four in high schools and four in universities (Table 4). The participants enrolled in language schools and high schools had, on average, planned to stay in New Zealand for 45 months and 66 months respectively. At the time of the survey,

they had lived in New Zealand for less than one-fifth of their planned time. Therefore, it is very likely that they will move on to other sectors after they have completed their courses in the language school or high school.

Fifty-nine participants had enrolled in two or more sectors since arrival. As Table 4 shows, the most common “multiple sector” pathway undertaken was Language School – University (31.34%), followed by Language School – Polytechnic (13.8%), and Language School – High School – University (6.3%). In addition, four (5%) took the Language School – PTE pathway, and four (5%) took the Language School – High School pathway.

Eight multiple-sector students commenced study at a New Zealand high school. Their pathways included: High School – University (3.7%), High School – Polytechnic (3.7%), and High School – PTE (2.5%). Finally, one participant commenced study in a PTE, and one commenced in a polytechnic, and then moved on to a university (Table 4).

Clearly, the study pathways undertaken by Chinese students in New Zealand are very diverse. However, when asked if they were doing what they had planned to do before they came to New Zealand, all of the participants’ answered in the affirmative. At the time of survey, 60 percent of the participants confirmed that they were enrolled in a degree or diploma programme that matched their expected study goals prior to arrival in New Zealand.

Issues and challenges

During the discussions held with students about their studies in New Zealand, a number of issues and challenges the students had confronted were identified. As a consequence, these areas were further explored in the focus groups.

Language learning and the IELTS

Although most Chinese students plan to study for a degree or diploma in New Zealand, a major barrier preventing them from directly entering a university or polytechnic is the IELTS requirements. Consequently, studying in a language school is a popular starting point for study pathways in New Zealand. However, many students under-estimated the length of time required to pass the IELTS tests.

Before arriving in New Zealand, many participants planned to study in a language school for three months only. In reality they had to spend, on average, 14-15 months in the language school before obtaining the required IELTS scores to enter a university or polytechnic (Table 4). Many participants expressed frustration in relation to their experiences with the IELTS.

We find IELTS most important. We can't go to university if we don't pass it. Even if we pass it, we are still not very good at oral English. (Auckland FG)

I have come here for two months. As I can't learn the language and pass IELTS in a short time, I am unable to enter university this July. I feel bad. (#67, language school student)

The biggest challenge for IELTS is money. If we don't pass in one take, we have to repeat. I have now taken the test four times. I find I can't remember the questions even although I have taken them before. That's why I don't do well. (Hamilton FG)

Looking back, it would have been better if I had prepared myself well in the English language and passed the IELTS before coming over. (#52, whose study pathway was Language School - University)

IELTS forces you to study, somewhat like the secondary school certificate examination in China. Some essays in the reading part are difficult to us. They are too academic. It's not fair. (Hamilton FG)

I passed the IELTS in a short period of time -- 6.5. I got 6 points the first time on April 8th and then 6.5 points on June 17th. My ability to listen, speak, read and write has been enhanced. In particular, I got 7 points for writing. I planned to reach 6.5 points within three months. In practice, I spent half a year on it. (Auckland FG)

One participant passed the IELTS using less than the expected time. However, the language school failed to refund him for the time he did not study in the language school.

The agent chose the language school for me. At that time the agent asked us to pay the fees of four school terms at one go. But I only spent two terms to get through the IELTS. (#49, Language School – University)

Despite the problems many participants had with the IELTS, they were satisfied with their teachers and the way they were taught in language schools.

Teachers in the language school are quite good. My language ability improved a lot here. (Auckland FG)

Several participants mentioned that they were particularly happy with “small class teaching” in the language school, which gave them “more opportunities to communicate with teachers” (#38) and for teachers “to pay more attention to each student” (#41). Many described their overall learning experiences in the language school as “relaxed”. A majority had little or no difficulties understanding teachers, and asking questions in class. Activities that they had more difficulties with included: expressing opinions to teachers, making oral presentations, and writing assignments. One participant commented on language teaching and learning within a variety of different education systems.

In China, there are also good learning institutes. For example, language learning is highly demanding on grammar and usage. This helps us a lot with learning English. Those who are poor in English used to get handouts from teachers before exams. There is no such practice here. We are faced with the issue. We have learned how to solve problems ourselves here. (#09, Language School - University)

Learning activities in the high school

Compared with the high schools in the PRC, most participants found learning in New Zealand high schools “more relaxed” (#24), “easier to adapt to” (#41), and that they were required to do “fewer assignments” (#59).

The high schools are very different from those in China. The learning atmosphere is more relaxed and flexible. There is more room for independent thinking and more freedom of choice. (#21, High School - University)

Studying in China is blindfolded. The pressure is great. In NZ there is still pressure in education, yet it is comparatively more active. (#30, High School - PTE)

In China, it is a “duck feeding” style. It is examination based. Students forget everything over a holiday after the exam. In NZ, emphasis is on the inspiration of students’ independent thinking and learning interest. (#30)

Teachers here are not as serious as those in China. The teacher- student relationship is more harmonious. Some teachers take great care of their students’ welfare. (#21)

We have to take mock exams at school. The teachers only give us marks for the papers but they don't provide us the standard answers. So we don't know what is wrong with our answers. In China, teachers will let us know what is wrong. (Hamilton FG)

Overall, most participants studying in a high school at the time of this survey reported that they had little or no difficulties understanding teachers and managing study workload. However, around half said they seldom asked questions in class, and very few had made oral presentations or worked on group projects.

When international students complete their high school studies, their NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) English results will be used to assess whether they have met the English language requirements for admission to universities. Some participants opted for a high school study pathway because they thought that NCEA English was easier than the IELTS. However, like many language school students, those attending high school had under-estimated the time it would take for them to achieve NCEA results that would ensure them entrance to university. As Table 4 shows, participants who followed a High School – University study pathway had, on average, planned to study in New Zealand for four years only, but at the time of survey, the average time they had lived in New Zealand was over 5 years.

I used to have a simple thought: to attend high school for one year and then enter university. I find this plan is not working now. It will require a year to earn enough credits and another to prepare well in English. (#75, High School – Polytechnic)

Learning activities in tertiary classrooms

Participants who studied in universities, polytechnics and PTEs⁷ found the New Zealand education system “*more flexible*” (#01), “*focussing less on exam results*” (#21), and emphasising “*understanding and creativity*” (#29), “*group cooperation*” (#10), “*active participation*” (#19), and “*self-motivation*” (#30).

The higher education here provides students the chance to choose their courses of study according to their interests. You are able to learn what you like although the course work is very demanding. (#51, Language School - University)

In China, education is by examination and is rather rigid. The NZ education system inclines towards hands on ability. (#09, Language School - University)

I was neutral towards the education situation before I came here. Now, compared with China, I find the education here is quite special. This relates especially to course selections and the interaction of teaching and learning and other curriculum activities. All of these are very substantial. (#18, Language School - University)

Education resources are relatively abundant in NZ. Assistance is easily available whenever there is a problem. The operation is good. (#15, Language School - University)

Before I arrived I heard that the education standard was very high. And now I find that it is actually quite good. The teachers are easy going and the teaching structure is well planned. (#11, Language School - University)

⁷ There were six participants studying in PTEs at the time of survey. Five of them were enrolled in diploma programmes and one in a bachelor programme.

Some participants described their learning experience as “*stressful but active*” (#11) because they had to be “*more independent*” (#08), and “*more reliance on ourselves*” (#36).

The lecturers here will not enquire about your study themselves. If you don't ask for them, they won't ask for you. But in China, even guest lecturers will keep an eye on you. For example, if you don't attend a class in China, the lecturer will demand an explanation. Here the lecturer won't bother. (Hamilton FG)

We didn't have a schedule in China and the teacher didn't provide us the schedule and exam arrangements. We have to follow the teacher at lectures. Teaching is very clear here. Students know at the beginning of the term what every lesson is about and how the exam will be conducted. (Hamilton FG)

I find lecturers here very good. They are international with a pluralistic background and easy to communicate with. (#18, Language School - University)

In China teachers don't welcome questions. Here teachers allow ample time for questions. (Hamilton FG)

The teachers here give higher marks to students than those teachers in China. It's not uncommon to have 80 or 90 marks. In China, we often get 60 or 70. It's a motivation to have high marks. (Hamilton FG)

Although most participants enrolled in a tertiary institution had previously studied in a language school or high school in New Zealand, the change from a teacher-centred approach common in the PRC to the student-centred approach favoured in the New Zealand educational system was a substantive adjustment for them. Participants reflected on the learning approaches they had used in the PRC and identified aspects from this background that they were able to transfer to the New Zealand situation, as well as aspects considered inappropriate to their new learning environment.

The foundation education in China is helpful and we are hard working. The obstacle for us is not being confident and putting our mind at ease. The new things we have learned are the internet and using the library to do research. (#15, Language School - University)

The learning experience in China has equipped me with the ability to shoulder the pressure. But it does not help me to have my own way of thinking. Studying here is more systematic and everyone finds his own way of thinking. (#30, PTE)

Some participants reported having difficulties understanding lectures, which impeded their ability to take notes. Many did not cope well with spontaneous classroom interactions, and seldom asked questions in class. However, the tasks reported as the most difficult were making oral presentations, and working on group projects. Intercultural issues affected their interactions with domestic students during group work projects.

I work with Chinese on group projects most of the time. I don't like working with Kiwis and they don't like working with us. Sometimes I work with Kiwi students when the teachers assign us to do so. If I have to choose myself, I still want to stick with Chinese. It's because we don't have common interest with the Kiwis. I think it requires semi-mandatory arrangement by teachers to have Chinese and Kiwi students working together on group projects. (#29, High School - University)

It's a little difficult for group work. It's because everybody's ideas are different. Sometimes the westerners do not fully understand our way of thinking. And sometimes we cannot express our views adequately. This process can cause headaches. When a bunch of Chinese gathers together, there are no problems with communication. Yet there is also no guarantee on the

quality of the product. For Chinese students to merge with local students, the local students must first have a positive attitude towards this move. In addition, Chinese students must also enhance their language and expression ability. They have to join the westerners actively and contribute positively to the working group. (#06, Language School - Polytechnic)

Practical implications

In considering the educational experiences of Chinese international students in New Zealand, it is important to consider the contexts within which their overseas study decisions were made, the study pathways undertaken, and the learning approaches previously used. In the early 2000s New Zealand was a new overseas study destination; many Chinese students arrived with little prior knowledge of the country. This seems to have caused some dissonance of expectations among the students.

Our analysis of the study pathways undertaken by PRC Chinese students shows that the majority were multiple sector students: they took language courses as a precursor to studies in other sectors rather than as a stand-alone course. Although the pathways they subsequently took differed, their ultimate goal was to get a bachelor or higher degree. Similar study pathways were reported by students from the PRC studying in Australia (Australian Education International, 2006). However, the Chinese students in this study reported that they had difficulties getting good information and guidance to help them choose suitable study pathways. Some also had difficulties adjusting to the on-going language and learning requirements as they progressed through the educational system in New Zealand.

One area of concern is the IELTS. Because no IELTS results are required prior to admission to language schools, this has been considered an advantage to studying in New Zealand as opposed to destinations such as Australia, Canada and the UK. However, IELTS results are required for admission to New Zealand universities and polytechnics. Before they arrived, many participants were unaware of the high standards of English language required for university entrance, and had therefore under-estimated the time required to achieve entrance qualifications. Our research found that this situation has caused considerable frustration among Chinese students in the language schools, and to some extent, those in high schools. Many students had to study in New Zealand for longer and their study plan cost them than they had expected; this outcome meant that students had to alter their study plans in order to gain entrance to universities and polytechnics.

Chinese students also need to make substantive adjustments to their new learning environment, with tertiary students reporting more difficulties than either high school or language school students. Students reported on the important foundation provided by their prior Chinese education. However, the learning environment—requiring co-constructed learning, interaction in the classroom, group work, and independence in study—challenged students' adaptation and adjustment and necessitated that they reconstruct and renegotiate prior learning strategies (Ho, Holmes, & Cooper, 2005; Holmes, 2004, 2005). Despite these challenges, participants across the sectors indicated that they were working towards the study goals they or their families had set for them before they came, and in general they were satisfied with the New Zealand educational system and with their teachers.

These findings have significant practical implications for agents and institutions. Getting a high quality education and good value for money are the most significant factors amongst Chinese students for choosing their study destination. We need to do more to address the concerns of multiple sector students in order to enhance New Zealand's competitive edge in the international education market. Future research may wish to explore the value of twinning programmes in preparing Chinese students for mid-entry to tertiary programmes.

It is worth noting that students' views towards studying in New Zealand changed over time. Satisfied students tended to rate more positively their choice of New Zealand as a study destination. Aside from educational experiences, daily living experiences in the wider New Zealand community also

contributed to students' overall satisfaction with New Zealand life. This topic will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

LIVING IN NEW ZEALAND

This chapter examines the daily ‘lived’ experiences of Chinese international students. The first two sections explore participants’ levels of satisfaction with their current circumstances, comparing these with their experiences during their first three months in New Zealand. Any changes in their experiences and feelings about life in New Zealand are considered in greater detail in section three. Sections Four and Five discuss the students’ accommodation arrangements and support networks both in New Zealand and back home. The chapter concludes by identifying some possible sources of Chinese students’ dissatisfaction with life in New Zealand.

Feelings on quality of life

Focusing on how participants felt about their quality of life at the time of the in-depth interview, they were asked to rate, on a ladder with ten rungs, where they were currently standing (Figure 3), and to recall where they had been standing when they first arrived in New Zealand. Rung ten represented the best possible life for them and rung one represented the worst possible life for them.

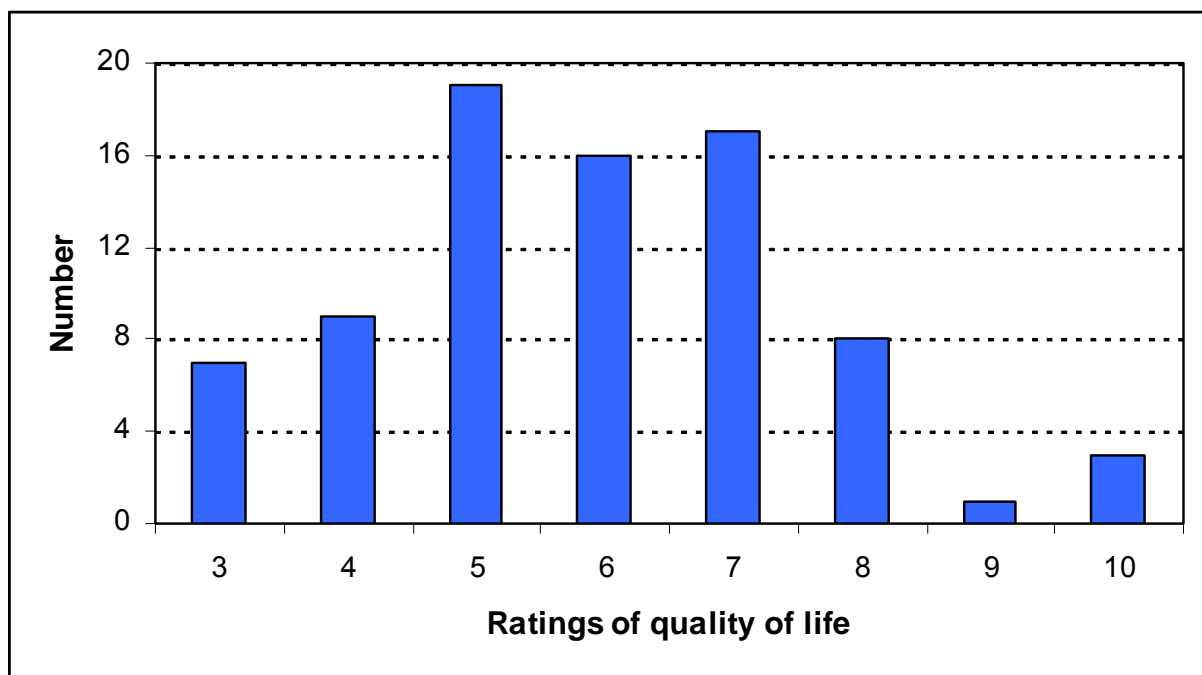


Figure 3 Ratings of quality of life at the time of interview

The participants’ ratings of their life at the time of the interviews ranged from 3 to 10 and 5.88 represents the mean score. The answers they gave justifying their ratings were surprisingly diverse. Some participants’ ratings were based on what they thought life should be for them; they gave low ratings of satisfaction for their life in New Zealand if things were not working out as well as they had planned. Some participants’ ratings were based on effort; they gave high ratings if they had tried their best. Other participants’ ratings were based on specific things they either liked or disliked about New Zealand. The varied responses highlight the students’ assorted backgrounds and experiences, and accentuate the different pathways followed since arriving in New Zealand.

Currently I am standing on rung 10. I have tried my best to do everything. (#52, 4 years in NZ, rating: 10).

My ideal life is to have a good job, a family, and the ability to look after my parents. At present, although I can look after myself, I am completely dependent on my parents financially. Still far from my ideal of what life should be. (#33, 2-3 years in NZ, rating: 3).

I feel I should have a better life because I have already been here for quite a while. If I had worked hard all the time it would be better, but I wasted so much time in the past. (#72, 6-7 years in NZ, rating: 4).

Now I am very satisfied that things have worked out as I have planned: completed my study, found a job, applied for PR. There seems nothing that I am dissatisfied with. If there is, it is the expensive rental and fuel charges. (#29, 6-7 years in NZ, rating: 7)

Now I am most satisfied about the weather and the environment in NZ: clean, comfortable, fresh air. I am most dissatisfied with being discriminated against. Sometimes people say dirty words to us on the streets. As I am not fluent in English, some university staff show impatience towards us. (#09, 3 years in NZ, rating: 7)

Participants who came to New Zealand before 2003 were also dissatisfied with the high exchange rate. Some participants who had just graduated reported low ratings of life in New Zealand because of uncertainty about their future.

I find life quite leisurely here, yet other stresses are still great. School fees keep increasing yearly. The kiwis are less friendly yearly too. (#18, 3-4 years in NZ, rating: 7)

I don't have a permanent job, and feel very insecure. If I can't find a job, I will have to go home. Job opportunities back in China aren't good either. (#06, 3-4 years in NZ, rating: 5)

I am now standing on rung five: if I were in China I would have a better life. Here I have to be completely reliant on myself; there is no-one to discuss matters with. Besides, it's difficult to find a job, exchange rates are high and the cost of living is rising. (#15, 5-6 years in NZ).

The first three months

The participants ratings about life in New Zealand during the first three months here ranged from 1 to 10 (Figure 4), and 4.53 was the mean score. Language barriers and loneliness were cited by a majority of the participants as the two most difficult aspects of everyday life during the first three months.

For the first three months after my arrival, I felt very lonely. Language was a problem. I didn't prepare well for coming to a strange land. I was homesick and I had no social life. (#14, 4-5 years in NZ, rating: 2)

During the first three months I found language and loneliness the biggest problem. To overcome this hardship, I kept studying and making friends. (#33, 2-3 years in NZ, rating: 2)

I had no food and no water on my first day in NZ. I couldn't find a bank to change money. Later on a Chinese girl lent me \$200, absolutely trusting that I would return the money to her. And a taxi driver drove me to a bank without charging me one cent. (#01, 2-3 years in NZ, rating: 1)

We can handle the academic English but we can't handle it (the local language) in daily life. For example we can't express simple words like "deep fry", "roast", "stir fry" and "cook". We find it most difficult to talk about topics such as "describe the clothes which you like". (Auckland FG)

I was reading for a PhD when I was in China. After I came here I had to prepare for my English test. I was very homesick. I was thinking of my children all the time. I rented a house and lived alone; there was no feeling of home at all. I felt I had given up my roles as mother and wife to pursue a better life. One day the lecturer discussed an essay in class. I read that essay 10 years ago in my first year undergraduate course. I felt very bad that day. I felt I was back to where I was 10 years ago. (#40, less than 1 year in NZ, rating: 1)

I was only 16 when I arrived. I had a lot of difficulties communicating with my homestay. I was very unhappy, and often cried when I was alone. I rang Mum, and she cried too. (#65, 4-5 years in NZ, rating: 1)



Figure 4 Ratings of quality of life during first three months in New Zealand

A number of participants expressed low ratings of satisfaction with New Zealand life during their first three months because of the negative experiences they encountered with homestay families.

My homestay family was extremely bad. I felt they had no respect for Chinese people; they looked down on us. Each day I only had water, bread and honey for breakfast, and only rice and nothing else for lunch. Dinner was OK. I lost 10 kg in one month, and felt very lonely. I didn't have any communication with my homestay. (#08, 3-4 years in NZ, rating: 1)

I was homesick. I didn't adjust to the new school system. I had plenty of free time, but I didn't know what to do. I didn't like my homestay. On the first night I moved in with my homestay family, my mum phoned me. They said it's too late and didn't allow me to answer the phone. I was very upset. (#34, 5-6 years in NZ, rating: 4)

However, despite problems with language and homesickness, some participants were satisfied with their life in New Zealand during those first three months.

For the first three months in NZ, I found language the biggest issue. I wanted to tell my landlord that his goldfish was beautiful but couldn't express myself right after trying for more than an

hour. It is much better now. Though I am not very eloquent, I am comfortable with everyday communication. It's important to study hard. The teachers and my landlord have helped me a great deal. (#18, 3-4 years in NZ, rating: 8)

The weather and living environment here were excellent: very quiet and comfortable. In the first three months, homesick was the biggest issue. I am still homesick now but not as severe as before. The solution is to be busy and asserting more pressure on oneself. That is why I keep studying and working part-time. I have never stopped once. I keep striving towards my goal, with a view to bring my parents over to stay with me. (#29, 6-7 years in NZ, rating: 8)

Changes in feelings on life in New Zealand

In this section, participants' ratings about their life in New Zealand over the two time periods were compared in order to obtain an impression of whether they felt better, worse, or much the same, as time progressed. Coding their ratings on a 10-point scale as satisfied (6-10) or not at all satisfied (1-5), the dynamic changes in their feelings about life in New Zealand are summarised in Figure 5 and Table 5.

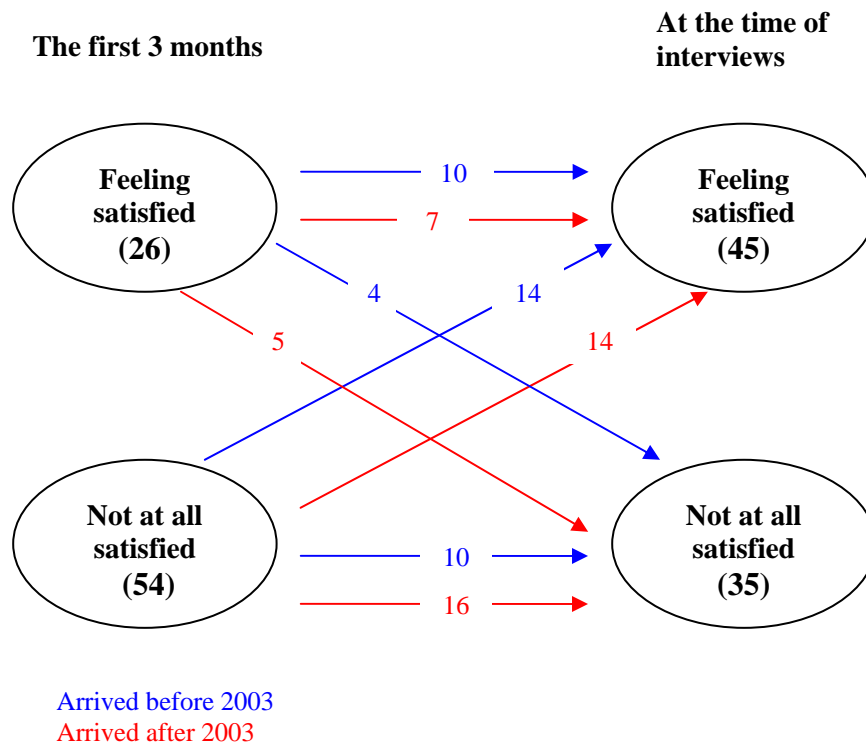


Figure 5 Feelings on life in New Zealand during the first three months and at the time of interview

Table 5 Changing feelings on life in New Zealand by year of arrival in New Zealand

Feelings on quality of life		Time of arrival to New Zealand				Total	
		Before 2003		After 2003		Participants	
First 3 months	At time of interview	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not at all	Satisfied	14	36.9	14	33.3	28	35.0
Satisfied	Not at all	4	10.5	5	11.9	9	11.2
Satisfied	Satisfied	10	26.3	7	16.7	17	21.3
Not at all	Not at all	10	26.3	16	38.1	26	32.5
Total		38	100	42	100	80	100

Feeling better

Table 5 shows that 28 out of the 80 participants (35%) felt that their life at the time of the interviews was better than they recalled it had been when they first arrived. They currently rated their present satisfaction levels between six and ten whereas their initial impressions upon arriving in New Zealand were recorded at levels one to five. The participants described their reasons for this change in perception as follows:

At present I am on rung seven. I am satisfied because I have finished my studies, and have many good friends. I also have my own car. I have no worries in my daily life at the moment. In the first three months, I was on rung four. I didn't adjust to the life here and I had no friends. Besides, I didn't have a car and couldn't go anywhere. (#09, 3-4 years in NZ).

I am standing on rung six. With my parents living here, I really don't have anything to worry about. I'm only dissatisfied because they are too restrictive. In the first three months, I was on rung five. Everything was so new to me then. Once I got lost and walked for three hours to get home. I didn't understand what the teachers said in class. (#75, 1-2 years in NZ)

I am now on rung six, because not everybody has a chance to study abroad. But I have made a lot of effort in these years. If I could stay behind, I would stand much higher on the ladder. I was on four when I first arrived. My English was very poor at that time. I had no friends, and wasn't making much progress with my studies. (#28, 4-5 years in NZ)

I am now on rung eight or nine, because life is really simple and relaxed here, and my study is fine. I was on rung four in the first three months. I felt worried about spending money. I had little communication with my homestay, and was not eating well. (#23, 3-4 years in NZ)

Feeling worse

In contrast, nine participants (11.2%) felt that their present life was worse than what it had been when they first arrived. Ratings of their life at the time of interviews were between 4 and 5, but their ratings of life when they first arrived were between six and nine. Some of the participants in this group described stresses they experienced, including concerns about their future, such as being able to find employment once they had completed their studies. In retrospect, these students believed they were much happier when they first arrived; specifically, they had enjoyed the freedoms associated with a lack of parental control (their parents were still living in their home countries), and they were generally unconcerned about life in general.

I am on rung five at the moment because I have a lot of psychological stress in these two years. I failed several subjects, and have had to extend my stay here. I also have to juggle between work and study. In the first three months, I had no financial stress. I passed IELTS in two months, and was immediately admitted to the university. I was very pleased with myself then. (#05, 3-4 years in NZ)

I am now on rung five, not too high and not too low. Many aspects of my present life are very uncertain: I haven't finished my studies and I haven't yet got my PR. In the first three months, I was on rung eight. I didn't have much worry at that time, and I had not planned to apply for PR. I was only enjoying life. (#3, 4-5 years in NZ)

I am on rung five because I haven't finished my studies, and am still spending money from home. I was on rung six during the first three moments. When I first arrived, my thoughts were really simple: I was very focused on my studies. Now, I have to face a lot of practical problems in real life. (#50, 4-5 years in NZ)

I am now on rung four, because I expected life to be far better than it is now. The place that I am now living in is like the housing in China in the 80s. My present living condition is far worse than that in China. Besides, interest rates have almost doubled since I first arrived. Local people are not friendly towards Chinese: some only want to make money from rich Chinese students. With rising costs of living, we feel that our quality of life has declined. In the first three months, I was on rung 7 or 8. I lived with a homestay family and I didn't need to cook. Interest rates were much lower then so I had more money to spend. My quality of life was much better then than it is now. (#02, 3-4 years in NZ).

Feeling the same: generally satisfied

Seventeen (11.3%) of the participants rated their life at the time of the interviews and during the first three months between levels six and ten. This group of participants were generally satisfied with life in New Zealand and had not encountered any major problems during their first few months.

I think I am now on rung seven because I really like my present life and enjoy my freedom. In the first three month I was standing on rung eight. My homestay family was very good. Teachers were nice and I had made some good friends. (#10, 5-6 years in NZ)

I am now on rung nine. I hope to get higher still, because I am an optimistic person. I am now applying for PR, but still haven't had a reply. During the first three months, I was also on nine. Although I was new to the country and didn't know much English at that time, I hadn't experienced any major problems. People treated me nicely too. (#30, 6-7 years in NZ)

I'm now on six. I like my current living circumstances, and I'm doing fine in my studies. I was also on six when I first arrived. I feel there haven't been any major changes at all. (#43, 2-3 years in NZ)

I am now on rung seven; I was also on seven for the first three months. My life at present is quite similar to what it was when I first arrived. I feel I am better than many people in some aspects, but not as good as others on certain aspects. I have a better chance compared with people who aren't able to go abroad. (#43, 2-3 years in NZ).

Feeling the same: not at all satisfied

The last group comprised 26 participants (32.5%) whose ratings of their life both at the moment and during the first three months were between one and five. Over two-thirds of the participants in this group did not choose New Zealand as their first choice of study destination.

I think I'm now on rung five. I have just graduated, and I'm feeling quite uncertain about my future. In terms of finding work, having a good qualification doesn't always guarantee a good job. I am undecided whether I want to do further studies, as finding a job is so hard. I think I was more or less the same during the first three months. I didn't have so much stress at that time, but I was very lonely. (#11, 4-5 years in NZ)

I'm on rung 4 or 5 now. I feel I still have a long way to go. I want to get a degree, and then try to find a job. For the first three months I was on one. I was very lonely. I didn't know anything about this country and I didn't know anybody here. (#21, 4-5 years in NZ)

I'm on rung three now. I am still very young, and many things that I face here aren't too smooth. But because my parents have spent so much money to send me out, I don't want to tell them the difficulties I face here. I don't want them to get worried about me. During the first three months I think I was on four, slightly better than now. Because I didn't know anything then, I was happy: no parents' restrictions, and plenty of freedom. (#38, 1-2 years in NZ)

I think I am on rung four now. I have been here for six years, but many things are not working out as planned. For the first three months, I was on rung one or two. At that time I didn't know the place, didn't know anybody, didn't have a computer, and was not eating well. But my worst time was when I went to the casino. I lost a lot of money and sometimes I didn't even have money to buy food. (#48, 5-6 years)

I am now on five. I feel uncertain about my future. I don't know what I am going to do later. I was on three when I first arrived. I had picked up many bad habits at that time: gambling, drinking and karaoke etc. Every day I hung out with my friends and didn't study at all. (#51, 3-4 years in NZ)

Discussion

In this study, the ladder scale was used for two open-ended questions. This helped participants reflect on their experiences of living in New Zealand, both at the time of the interview and when they first arrived in the country. A wide spread of scores were obtained for both questions, suggesting that the participants' evaluation of their experiences in New Zealand was varied. Indeed, if we just take the mean scores they gave (4.53 during the first three months and 5.88 at the time of interview), the impression is that the longer the participants stayed in New Zealand, their levels of satisfaction increased. However, as our study shows, nearly 45 percent of participants were not at all satisfied with their life in New Zealand at the time of interview, and a proportion of them felt worse than they recalled feeling when they first arrived (Table 5).

As noted in the previous chapter, rising fees and expenses were often cited as a source of dissatisfaction among participants who came to New Zealand prior to 2003. Further, participants expressed dissatisfaction because they were disenchanted with the reality of living in New Zealand compared to the image they had of it prior to their arrival. Participants talked about their dream of being released from parental control and anticipated freedom to do things they were unable to do in China as reasons why they had chosen to study abroad. However, these expectations were often not met because participants were lonely in New Zealand, or they experienced hardship because they believed they could no longer count on their parents for help. As outlined in the previous chapter, the participants' demonstrated mismatched expectations in relation to the learning environment they encountered. In the following section we examine two important difficulties the participants had to confront relating to their experiences of living away from home.

Accommodation experiences

Most participants (92.5%) lodged in homestays when they arrived in New Zealand (Table 6), but less than a quarter (21.3%) were resident in homestays when interviewed (Table 7). The majority of the participants who still lived in homestays were studying at language schools and secondary schools. Tertiary students were most likely to be flatting (74.5%), or boarding (16.4%) (Table 7).

Table 6 Accommodation on arrival and types of accommodation resided since arrival

Type of accommodation	On arrival		Accommodation resided since arrival	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Homestay	74	92.5	74	92.5
Flatting	3	3.8	54	67.5
Boarding	0	0.0	31	38.8
Hostel	1	1.2	4	5.0
Relative's home	2	2.5	5	6.2
Other*	0	0.0	1	1.2
Total participants	80	100		

* Motel accommodation provided by the employer

Table 7 Accommodation at the time of interview by type of educational institution

Type of accommodation	Language schools		Secondary schools		Tertiary institutions		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Homestay	7	53.8	8	66.7	2	3.7	17	21.3
Flatting	4	30.8	3	25.0	41	74.5	48	60.0
Boarding	1	7.7	1	8.3	9	16.4	11	13.8
Hostel	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.8	1	1.2
Relative's home	1	7.7	0	0.0	1	1.8	2	2.5
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.8	1	1.2
Total participants	13	100	12	100	55	100	80	100

The participants' homestay experiences varied. The majority of participants who were still living in homestays at the time they were interviewed expressed satisfaction with their accommodation and felt they were well looked after by their host families. However, a few participants who had previously lodged in homestays described their time in this type of accommodation as the worst experiences they had encountered while living in New Zealand.

My homestay has helped me a lot. They comfort me when I am down. They explain to me how to get along with Kiwis. (Auckland FG)

I have lived [here] for two months. The old couple is very helpful towards my everyday life and study. I find that Westerners value family ties very much. This has changed my fragmented preconceptions about the West. When I first came, I had to take a bus to school. My home mum found me a map that evening and told me how to take the bus. (Auckland FG)

I am very mindful of my relationship with my homestay family. I will buy them presents on their birthdays. They used to treat me as a student but now they treat me as a family member. When I

present them with a gift, they are very happy. They find that our relationship is not about money. They all text me on my birthday. I am so happy. (Auckland FG)

I could only give 6 points to my first homestay. There was no sentiment of a family. They were unhappy if the time I took a bath exceeded 6 minutes. (#52)

It's difficult to find a good homestay. There is always a sense of stress living in other people's place. My first homestay was very far from campus so I moved out after two weeks. (#34)

For the homestay I was with, she worked, took care of two children and two homestay students, all single-handed. It's impossible for her to take good care of us. I have a friend who is banned from eating at night as his homestay host locks up the fridge. (#06)

Most participants had resided in more than one type of accommodation since coming to New Zealand (Table 6). Over half of the participants who had moved out of homestays to go flatting or boarding were dissatisfied with the restrictions imposed by their homestays (52.65%), for example, restricting their use of telephone, computer and shower, or not allowing them to bring friends home. Other reasons for changing accommodation included: poor relationships with host families (28.1%), problems with food (26.3%), costs (24.6%), the distance from campus (24.6%), poor living conditions (14%) and communication barriers (14%). A few were unhappy because they were asked to help with housework.

The good point about homestays: they help new comers. The bad point about homestays: they are too expensive, and there is the conflict on cultural difference. (#14)

The living condition for my first homestay was quite good. But the eating habit was rather different. There were too many rules. It was like being jailed. The second homestay is an old couple who treat me like family. They make Chinese dishes and introduce me to family members. I am very happy. However, I can't bring home any friends. (#54)

The homestay experience is like boarding. There is no feeling of home. I am not getting used to the food but the situation is good for practicing oral English. (#33)

I have lived in various kinds of accommodation. Homestays are good in a way as they provide an environment which helps in language learning. It is not so good because you can become embarrassed when there is a communication barrier. There are also a number of restrictions posted by the homestay. Service is good in student hostels and the environment is good too. Yet it's too expensive. There is more freedom when living in apartments. Yet the tenants around are from all walks of life. There is no sense of safety. (#18)

I like homestays as I don't have to do any housework. If conditions allow, I go for homestays as I don't like cooking myself. Yet they are a little too expensive. I also like boarding as I don't need to do anything. It's alright as long as I pay the rent on time. I don't like flatting as I have to pay water and electricity charges, telephone bills and even have to dispose of the refuse myself. (#29)

We don't have to bother with details on daily life as everything is arranged under the homestay. The only problem is that I don't feel comfortable living in other people's house. There is a psychological barrier. Flatting takes up a lot of our time attending to routine, which is not good. If we can't find a good flatmate, both of us will be unhappy. Flatting is good however because it's cheaper. It also helps students to lead an independent life. (#15)

The biggest advantage of homestays is that they help to enhance our language ability. I suggest homestays are a must do. The drawback is that they can be very restrictive. For renting a place, the biggest advantage is that we can take charge of everything and the living environment can

be good. If all flatmates look after the place, we can live leisurely. The drawback is it will take a lot of trouble. We have to pay rents, water and electricity charges, telephone bills, etc. all by ourselves. (#30)

Flating and boarding were common types of accommodation used by participants who had lived in New Zealand for some time. The participants who flatted reported that when compared with the homestay experience, they enjoyed greater freedom (40.2%), cheaper costs (21.1%), a better living environment (14.6%), better relationships (11.1%), better meals (7.4%), more convenient location (3.7%) and more privacy (1.9%). The participants who went boarding cited greater freedom (36.3%), cheaper costs (27.3%), better relationships (27.3%) and better living conditions (9.1%) as advantages. However, on the whole participants considered the homestay experience was good for newcomers. For example, living in a homestay often provides students with a positive environment in relation to learning and improving their English language skills. It is also an atmosphere where participants felt they gained useful information about living in New Zealand. In addition, having a good relationship with a homestay family was considered an important source of satisfaction and support, and many participants emphasised the benefits of finding a place to live which exuded “a sense of home”. Suggestions on how to improve various aspects of homestay care included:

Two points to enhance the quality of homestays: good language learning and good meals. (#54)

To promote homestays, we need friendliness, good meals and certainly good price. (#15)

As for the promotion of homestays, the school authorities should go through a screening on their background, both economic and living conditions. They shouldn't let students live with low-income or unemployed families. (#18)

To promote homestays, the host family must not be in poor economic condition and must not receive too many students. It's best to have old people whose grown up children are not living with them. These old people are lonely and want company. The place of the homestay shouldn't be too far away from campus as it is inconvenient to students. (#34)

How to promote homestays? Eating habits can be an issue. It does provide more chances for communication. Better families and living environments are also required. (#21)

How to keep students for homestays? Give them the sense of a home. (#33)

To retain the students, the hosts have to be more compassionate and show students around. They must not set up too many restrictions. (#14)

Overall speaking, homestays are good. Yet there might be conflicts. To promote homestays, the hosts have to care more about the students and initiate communication. (#35)

To promote homestays, the quality is most important. You also have to see what the purpose of providing a homestay is. (#06)

Social support

Together with accommodation, being able to obtain assistance for emotional and practical problems influenced the participants' experiences of living in New Zealand. In order to get participants to talk about availability and source(s) of social support, they were asked to indicate people whom they relied upon for help or support in relation to a range of activities (Table 8). On the basis of their answers, we also explored the support provided by their parents back home, and the support they received from various formal and informal sources within New Zealand.

Table 8 Sources and availability of social support

	Support from home country		Support from people in New Zealand						Not Seeking help %
	Parents %	Siblings/ Friends %	Spouse/ relatives %	Homestay family %	Chinese friends %	NZ friends/ classmates %	Teachers %	Other %	
Talk with you when upset	17.5	1.3	5.0	5.0	75.0	5.0	1.3	0.0	3.8
Comfort you if lonely	26.3	1.3	3.8	1.3	50.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	15.0
Listen to you	11.3	5.0	6.3	1.3	70.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	3.8
Help you if you are sick	0.0	0.0	7.5	3.8	60.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	18.7
Discuss relationship issues	10.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	75.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.5
Provide info about sexual health	7.5	0.0	1.3	5.0	23.8	0.0	1.3	26.2	34.9
Help with language problems	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.8	20.0	10.0	27.5	2.5	36.3
Help with educational issues	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	32.5	16.3	35.0	5.0	20.0
Help with living arrangements	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.0	38.8	3.8	5.0	15.0	35.0

Parents

Around a quarter of the participants considered that their parents were a major source of support in relation to their emotional needs (Table 8). Parents assisted in dealing with loneliness (26.3%), talking over upsetting issues (17.5%), would listen (11.3%) and could discuss relationship problems (10%). Most of the participants in this group telephoned their parents once a week, or two to three times a week.

I often talk to my parents because they have very rich life experiences. I become closer to my parents after I come over here. (#15, 5 years in NZ)

I talk to my parents about everything. In China I didn't see much of them and didn't know how to communicate with them. Now we often talk for 1-2 hours over the phone. (#74, 2-3 years in NZ)

I call my parents whenever I think about them. I also call them when I am in a bad mood. But I only chat with them and won't let them know I am unhappy. I call them at least once a week. When I am down, I will talk to my friends. I won't let my family know that I am upset. (Auckland FG)

Around 40 percent of the participants telephoned their parents every 2-4 weeks, or when they wanted to seek advice from their parents over major issues concerning their studies, visas or accommodation. Most of the participants in this group had not discussed emotional problems with their parents because they did not want their parents to worry. Besides, they also thought their parents would not understand their situation.

I seldom talk about the hardship on life over here. I mainly talk about the children. It's because we don't want my parents to worry about us. If they do worry about our lives, they will urge us to go back. (#40, less than 1 year in NZ, married and had children in the PRC)

I seldom discuss [my emotional problems] with them, because there hasn't been any major problem. The exception was the day after I sat the IELTS test. I discussed with them whether or not to apply for university. My parents wanted me to go back to China to study because they thought life was too difficult for me here. (#51, 3-4 years in NZ)

I seldom ask for help. I don't want them to get worried. I usually report on the happy side but not the unhappy side. They won't be able to help even if I tell them the problem. (#18, 3-4 years in NZ)

I rarely talk [about my unhappy experiences]. First, it's because my parents have never been abroad. For many things, even if I let them know, they won't be able to help. It will only make them worry. Second, my parents don't have the experience to deal with things abroad. They won't be able to help. Third, I don't want to trouble them. At home, dad was very serious and mum was very optimistic. (#30, 6-7 years in NZ)

My family and friends in China don't understand the situation here. But they don't want us to worry. They support us economically and spiritually. They hope that we eat well and have a good life. (Auckland FG)

In China, people understand only the broad picture of studying overseas but not the particulars of it. They have no way to understand our difficulties. We will not explain to them our difficulties either. So they will only admire us. We will not talk about the negative side of the story. But the stress still exists. (Auckland FG)

In the case of choosing a profession, we can't have enough discussion with our family in China. The final decision rests on us. We have to face the issue ourselves. My mum will say, "Whatever you choose, I will support you. But I don't understand the substantial situation in NZ; you have to decide for yourself." This is to say, she can't do the same as before when I was in China. She used to provide me with a lot of information, details and support. Now she can only give me economic and spiritual support. (Auckland FG)

Although the participants in this group did not often share with their parents the emotional issues and practical difficulties they faced in New Zealand, they felt they had a close relationship with them. They were also appreciative of their parents' economic and spiritual support, and valued the chance their parents gave them to study abroad. Hence, they were not necessarily lacking parental support. Indeed, by choosing not to ask for their parents' assistance and solving problems themselves, many felt they had become more independent since living in New Zealand.

When we were home and whenever there was a problem, our parents would solve it for us or we solved it together with our parents. But now we have to face problems ourselves. Though deep in our heart we want them to help us as if we were in China, but we know what they can only do is to support us economically and spiritually. (Auckland FG)

When I first came, I was as free as a bird. Now whenever I encounter difficulty, I miss home, I miss my parents. I used to quarrel with my parents. Now we are far apart. We don't quarrel any more. We are closer. Our relationship is growing. (#06, 3-4 years in NZ)

So far I have had a very good relationship with my parents. But during my puberty, I used to get angry with my parents. I find our relationship became even better after I came out from China. (#30, 6-7 years in NZ)

I rarely [phone my parents]. It's because I find I don't need to tell them about those problems which I can solve. I don't want them to worry. Before I came out, I had a very good relationship with my parents. Now it's even closer. It's because we don't see each other often and we care more about each other. (#29, 6-7 years in NZ)

Finally, about one in three participants said they rarely communicated with their parents. They described only talking to their parents when they needed financial assistance. Some mentioned feeling distant from their parents prior to studying abroad. Not surprisingly, none of the participants in this group reported that they turned to their parents for assistance with emotional issues.

One of the reasons I came over is that my parents were too restrictive on me. I couldn't bear it and I wanted to leave them. I couldn't leave my parents if I stayed in China. When I came over, I could be independent. (Christchurch FG)

I seldom discuss everyday life. Usually I discuss with them when I run out of money or when a lot has happened at school and I need their advice. They can't help on matters of daily routines. (#58, 2-3 years in NZ)

I rarely phone my parents. Even when I was sick I didn't want them to know, because I didn't want them to get worried. (#56, 3-4 years in NZ)

I rarely [phone my parents]. They don't understand the situation, and they can't help. If I have problems, I usually talk to my boyfriend and ask him to help me. (#65, 4-5 years in NZ)

I seldom ask for help, except for financial assistance. They can't help on other daily matters. Before I came out, I had a good relationship with my parents. Now it is different. We don't think the same, and I find it difficult to communicate with them. (#26, 3-4 years in NZ)

I rarely ask for help, because I don't want them to worry. We have a generation gap. I don't often agree with their opinion. However, if it is a major issue, I will ask them for help. Even back in China I rarely talked to my parents. They didn't agree with me all the time. (#41, less than 1 year in NZ)

Basically I rarely communicate with my parents, except about school fees. I don't think they understand the situation here, so they are unable to help. Before I came here, I didn't have a close relationship with my parents. My father is very busy, I didn't see him very often. I also didn't have a good relationship with Mum. But it has been better since I came out. (#46, 1-2 years in NZ)

Although these students described separation from their parents, both physically and emotionally, they have developed other forms of support since arriving in New Zealand. These networks are discussed further in the following section.

Relatives in New Zealand

A small number of participants lived with their spouse, or had relatives resident in New Zealand. These familial relationships often provided participants with emotional support. As one participant remarked:

I find my greatest support is from the mutual assistance with my wife. She came first. Before I came, I didn't understand what difficulties she was facing. For example she said the language was very difficult. I was in China and I thought she wasn't working hard enough. But now I understand that things are not that simple. I am beginning to know the difficulties my wife was facing. We are supporting each other. (Auckland FG)

Chinese friends in New Zealand

For many of the participants, the people who provided the majority of their emotional and practical support were often co-national friends and classmates (Table 8). Participants turned to their Chinese friends or classmates when they were upset (75%), lonely (50%), and when they wanted to discuss problems relating to relationships (75%), or they just needed someone to talk to (70%). Co-national friends also provided practical assistance when participants were sick (60%), they helped with living arrangements (38.8%), educational issues (32.5%), and language problems (20%), as well as providing information on sexual health (23.8%). A participant in the Auckland focus group summed up the importance of support from Chinese friends:

The support from schoolmates (Chinese schoolmates from language school) and friends is most important. We have the same life experience. We face the same stress in life. We encourage each other and help each other. We build up our confidence together. (Auckland FG)

New Zealand friends

In contrast, very little support was available from New Zealand friends and classmates for emotional needs (0-5%). As far as practical assistance was concerned, only one in six (16.3%) participants reported receiving help with educational issues and one in ten had received help with language problems (Table 8). Many participants said that before they had arrived in New Zealand they had expected to make friends with New Zealanders, but in fact had not found it easy to establish such friendships.

I used to think that I would make a lot of foreign friends after coming to NZ. I could chat with them heartily. But this has never happened. It's very difficult to make friends with the locals.

The culture is different. The things they care about are nothing to us. We don't have a clue about what they care about! (#65)

School is only a place for learning. It's not easy to make friends. There're no group activities. (#56)

Students are relatively friendly but we have few encounters with each other. Apart from study, we seldom talk about everyday life. (#18)

A lack of proficiency with the English language and little in the way of common interests were cited as the main difficulties involved in making New Zealand friends. Also there was a perception that New Zealand students were not interested in having international friends.

It's easy to have Chinese friends. We link up one by one. To make NZ friends, it's very difficult. It's because we don't have any common interests. (#49)

It's easy to make Chinese friends. There's a certain difficulty to make Kiwi friends. It's because we don't speak the language and we are not used being with them. (#58)

Making Chinese friends is easy but making local friends is very difficult. It's because our social circle is still small. It takes time for us to merge into their life. Language is one obstacle. (Auckland FG)

There are very hard working students and very lazy students here. They are not willing to make friends with international students. Maybe it's because of the language and cultural differences. (#54)

Some local students are passionate but there are some who don't want to get along with others. (#11)

I find the fundamental reason is the cultural difference. It's difficult for Chinese to merge into westerners' circle. I have asked some Chinese who have come here for a long time. Their friends are still mostly Chinese. ... Even when we play ball games, we play with Chinese. We seldom play with westerners. (Auckland FG)

Our lifestyle and cultural recognition are both different. For example people "go Dutch" here. There's a NZ friend who's very kind and willing to get along with us. We went out for dinner with him once. We insisted it would be our treat but he insisted to go "AA". I find we mostly go friends with Chinese. It's very difficult to be really harmonious. (Auckland FG)

A large proportion of Chinese students interact almost exclusively with co-nationals even after they have lived in New Zealand for a number of years. Developing friendships with New Zealanders involves a two-way process and some participants made the following suggestions for both sides to take the first step.

I find everyone wants to make friends with other races. But it seems all of us are not willing to take the first step. (Auckland FG)

For example, we will invite foreign students to join our evening parties at the Mid Autumn Festival in China. But the NZ government never invites us to any parties. I don't know if this is a cultural difference. (Auckland FG)

There are annual parties in the university. But Chinese students seldom join the function. It's because the culture is different. Chinese students won't join an unknown circle. The Kiwis will.

*For Chinese to join a circle, they are usually being introduced by someone they know.
(Christchurch FG)*

The chances for enhancing the ability of Chinese overseas students to merge into NZ society is in our own hands. As there is the difference in language and culture, we have to be positive and active and take more parts in their activities and programs. (#11)

Formal sources of support

Some participants reported that they had turned to their teachers and peer tutors for assistance with educational issues (35%) and language problems (27.5%). They contacted the health centre for information about sexual health (6.2%), and the international student office or accommodation services for assistance with living arrangements (12.5%). However, overall knowledge and usage of the services and facilities provided at educational institutions was quite limited, especially with regard to services and assistance when dealing with emotional issues, and information about sexual health. In addition, support and assistance provided by members of their homestay families was also considered to be very limited.

Practical implications

It is apparent from this study that living and studying in a new country is a challenge for many young Chinese international students. Loneliness is often experienced when students leave their families and the familiar world of their home country and they enter into a new environment where the educational system and cultures are markedly different. Participants described feeling anxious about meeting new people who generally spoke different languages from theirs. They also felt uncomfortable about changing their lifestyles and living with homestay families. Before new social networks were established, many students felt bored or alienated. Further, these social networks appeared to be difficult to establish among their New Zealand classmates due to differences in experiences and culture. However, the onus should not lie entirely with the Chinese students. Host students also need help in developing awareness and intercultural communication competence so they too are equipped to reap the benefits of internationalisation (Holmes, 2006; Holmes & O'Neill, 2006; Ward, 2006; Ward & Masgoret, 2005). These difficulties across cultures point to the need for greater emphasis on citizenship education that enhances critical cultural awareness of others beliefs, values, ethics, and worldviews (Guilherme, 2002).

If students are not adequately prepared for these changes, dissonance of expectations and dissatisfaction may occur. Other factors determining satisfaction in New Zealand revolved around proficiency with the English language, exchange rates and financial hardship, accommodation and the ability to integrate into New Zealand society. Some students remained reliant on their parents back in their home country for the majority of financial and emotional support, while other students described feelings of freedom and independence and sought out support from other networks, including relatives living in New Zealand and Chinese friends. However, a proportion of Chinese students remains dissatisfied because their lived experiences in New Zealand are different from what they had anticipated. Many of these students display a reluctance to seek assistance, either of a practical informational nature, or for emotional problems. This reluctance also includes seeking help from formal sources of support.

Generally, the findings in this study reveal that the participants had limited knowledge of, and seldom used, services and facilities provided at educational institutions. Most had not heard of the term "pastoral care", and they also lacked awareness of the actual services on offer from institutions. Only a small proportion indicated that they had used services to meet their pastoral needs, such as dealing with living arrangements, language and learning problems, and answering basic questions about life in New Zealand. None had used counselling services provided at institutions. The findings strongly

suggest that institutions need to develop more culturally responsive strategies for promoting pastoral care services and facilities to Chinese students. Bilingual counsellors and staff in various support roles can play a key role in helping newly arrived Chinese students overcome language barriers when seeking information and services. Also, teachers, tutors, homestay parents and other family members can deal more competently with Chinese students' needs and concerns if they are equipped with an adequate awareness and understanding of the cultural backgrounds and help seeking patterns of Chinese students.

Apart from cost, intercultural issues are a major reason for Chinese students moving out from homestays to go flatting. Yet many students admitted that flatting takes up a lot of their time because they have to attend to daily chores, and finding good flatmates is also an issue. As observed, many young Chinese students studying abroad are living away from their parents for the first time in their lives. While most enjoy the greater freedom, they described being somewhat daunted in relation to having to take responsibility for their own lives and having to deal with many aspects of daily life on their own. In this regard, homestay services should be improved and better marketed to international students as a resource for learning about life in New Zealand as well as providing an important source of social support for the young students. Parents too, have important roles to perform. They should not expect their children to become independent all at once. Parents must be prepared to listen to their children. They need to do this in order to gain deeper insights into the experiences their children encounter in New Zealand. They would then be in a better position to offer emotional support to their young children.

There is also a need to encourage and promote Chinese international students' participation in the wider community, as many are motivated to study overseas to gain a positive life experience in another country. Some also have plans to find work or apply for permanent residence after completing their study programmes. Chinese students' post-study plans and the factors influencing their plans will be examined in the next chapter.

RESIDENTIAL PREFERENCES AND POST-STUDY PLANS

This chapter examines Chinese international students' choice of the city of residence in New Zealand, and their post-study plans. As noted in Chapter Three, many Chinese students study abroad with the intention of finding work and applying for permanent residence after completing their studies. In considering whether their post-study plans have changed, we also looked at whether they have resided in other cities since arrival, and whether their choice of a study destination has changed. Following this, the reasons why plans have changed are explored and the implications of these findings for the export education industry are discussed.

Choosing which city to study, live and work

At the time of this research the number of participants studying in the four research sites were: 25 (31.3%) in Auckland, 16 (20%) in Christchurch, 28 (35%) in Hamilton and 11 (13.7%) in Rotorua. However, only 60 (75%) lived in the same city in which they had resided on arrival. Twenty (25%) had moved their residence since they arrived (Figure 6 and Table 9).

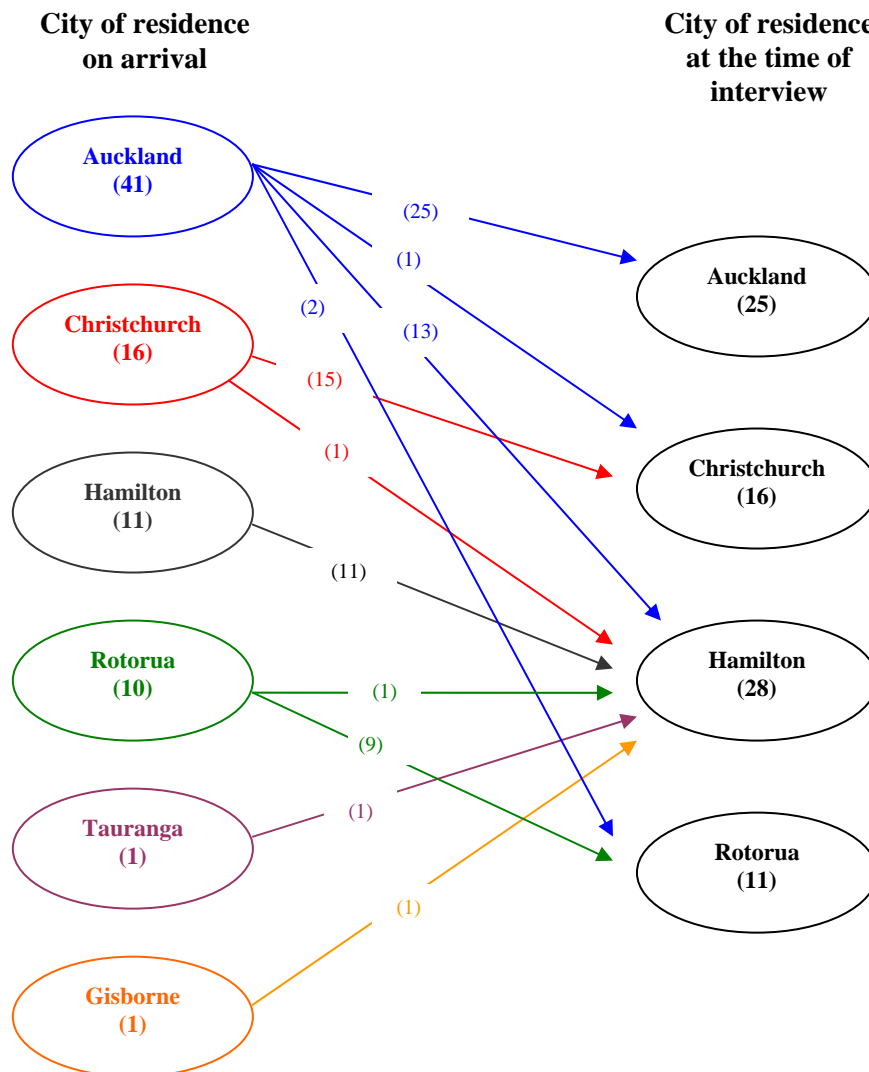


Figure 6 City of residence on arrival and at the time of interview

Table 9 Changes in the city of residence over time

City of residence on arrival	Current city of residence									
	Auckland		Christchurch		Hamilton		Rotorua		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Same city	25	100	15	93.8	11	39.3	9	81.8	60	75.0
Different city	0	0	1	6.2	17	60.7	2	18.2	20	25.0
Total	25	100	16	100	28	100	11	100	80	100

Auckland and Christchurch represent centres with high concentrations of international students, whereas Hamilton and Rotorua attract smaller numbers of international students (Ministry of Education, 2002). Among the participants in our study, over 70 percent were resident in Auckland or Christchurch when they first arrived. At the time of the survey, however, 16 of the 41 participants (39%) who were resident in Auckland on arrival had moved to other cities. Further, one of the 16 participants (6.3%) in Christchurch had moved to Hamilton (Figure 6). Participants who had moved away from Auckland said they preferred to study in a smaller centre where there were fewer Chinese students. Some participants in the Auckland focus group expressed views about this topic in the following way:

I like living in Hamilton: it's a clean, small city, easy to drive around. (#09, moved from Auckland to Hamilton after 10 months)

I don't recommend coming to Auckland for language study. The language environment is not as good in Auckland as there are too many Chinese. However if you are pursuing a profession or looking for a job, Auckland is a good place. (Auckland FG)

Don't think of entertainment if you want to study. You should go to cities other than Auckland to study. I don't like Auckland but I won't leave. It's because I like my homestay very much. (Auckland FG)

Across cities, participants in Hamilton were the most mobile. At the time of research, under 40 percent of the participants studying in this medium sized city had been resident in Hamilton since arrival. Half were from Auckland or Christchurch originally and 11 percent were from smaller centres such as Rotorua, Tauranga and Gisborne (Figure 6). As for Rotorua, most participants in this study had not changed their study location since arrival, and two had moved in from Auckland.

Participants' views were mixed when they were asked if they would choose to live in the same city again. Responses across cities also varied (Table 10).

Table 10 Choice of city if free to choose again

City of residence if free to choose	Current city of residence									
	Auckland		Christchurch		Hamilton		Rotorua		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Same city	17	68.0	14	87.5	14	50.0	3	27.3	48	60.0
Different city	5	20.0	1	6.3	8	28.6	8	72.7	22	27.5
Not sure	3	12.0	1	6.2	6	21.4	0	0.0	10	12.5
Total	25	100	16	100	28	100	11	100	80	100

Of all the cities, the largest proportion of participants who expressed a preference to stay in the same city (if they were free to choose again) came from Christchurch (87.5%). Most participants' perceptions of the city were quite positive.

I like living in Christchurch. I like its environment, traffic and people. The place is busy yet orderly. I want to stay here for study and living. (#11)

I like living in Christchurch. Its study environment is good. There is not much entertainment and we can focus on our study. (Christchurch FG)

I like living in Christchurch. There is a strong feeling of being overseas here. I feel cozy and homey after staying here for sometime. I don't want to go elsewhere. (#17)

I like Christchurch. The environment is good and tranquil. It's unlike chaotic Auckland. (#20)

A majority of Auckland's participants also wanted to stay in the same city (68%), but 20 percent preferred living in another city where there are fewer Chinese.

I like Auckland because it's busy and metropolitan. I will choose it again for study and work. (#27)

I like Auckland. There are many Chinese and many places for fun. (#45)

Don't like Auckland much. I would rather choose Hamilton or Wellington where there are fewer Chinese. For study I will stay in Auckland and don't want to change. (#32)

The response pattern of participants living in Hamilton and Rotorua was different. Although most considered their current city was good for studying, large proportions (28.6% and 72.7%) indicated that they would like to move to a bigger centre like Auckland, Christchurch or Wellington after they finished their current studies. Perceived better job opportunities were a major consideration for Hamilton participants who wanted to move after they finished their studies. Rotorua participants who were studying in language schools or high schools at the time of interviews, wanted to move to a bigger city for their university education.

I like Hamilton. I will choose Hamilton for study again. Later I wish to go to Auckland where there are more jobs. (#33)

I prefer Auckland to Hamilton. I will study and work in Auckland in later days as there is more fun and opportunity. (#47)

I like Rotorua. It's not big. Things are simple between people. It's a good place for study. (#73)

I like Rotorua. It's not a big city. There is less temptation which is good for language learning. But I won't stay here as there is no ideal university. (#67)

The above analysis of residential mobility shows that there are considerable variations in the residential preference of Chinese international students. Some students prefer to live in a bigger centre for its metropolitan life, while others prefer to live in a smaller centre because they believe it provides a better language environment and travel is much easier. It is interesting to note that the students' residential preferences are not fixed; many have changed their city of residence as they seek to maximise opportunities for study and work. Overall, there appears to be no major source of dissatisfaction among the participants with regard to their experiences of the city they live in.

The remainder of this chapter examines the participants' evaluation of factors influencing their choice of a study destination, and the dynamic changes experienced in relation to choosing New Zealand as a study destination, and their intentions of remaining in New Zealand after completing their studies.

Factors influencing the choice of an overseas study destination

As noted in Chapter Three, many participants did not play an active role in choosing their study destination. In the in-depth interviews, the participants were asked to reflect on their own experiences as an international student and list three factors they regarded as important when choosing a study destination.

Table 11 lists 14 factors that were considered most important in choosing an overseas study destination. Not surprisingly the top two factors related to cost and quality of education. These factors were regarded as important by 51.3 percent and 42.5 percent of the participants respectively. Other factors considered important in influencing the choice of a study destination included: future work prospects (26.3%), living environment (26.3%), host attitude towards international students (26.3%), and safety (25%). Further, the ratings of educational institutions (16.3%), immigration opportunities (15%), and an English-speaking environment (11.3%) were also emphasised.

Table 11 Factors in choosing a study destination

	Number	Percent
Fees and living costs	41	51.3
Quality of education	34	42.5
Future work prospects	21	26.3
Living environment	21	26.3
Host attitude towards international students	21	26.3
Safety	20	25.0
Ratings of educational institutions	13	16.3
Immigration opportunities	12	15.0
English speaking environment	9	11.3
Business environment	7	8.8
Weather	5	6.3
Relatives and friends in study destination	4	5.0
Political stability	2	2.5
Feedback from other international students	2	2.5

How did the above factors influence the choice of New Zealand as a study destination? In the in-depth interviews we asked the participants to indicate if New Zealand was their first choice study destination before they arrived. After reflecting on their experiences as international students in New Zealand, we asked them again, if New Zealand would be their first choice study destination now. The dynamic change in their views about choosing New Zealand as a study destination is presented in Figure 7 and Table 12. Overall, a larger proportion of participants considered New Zealand would be their first choice study destination after they had lived in the country for some time.

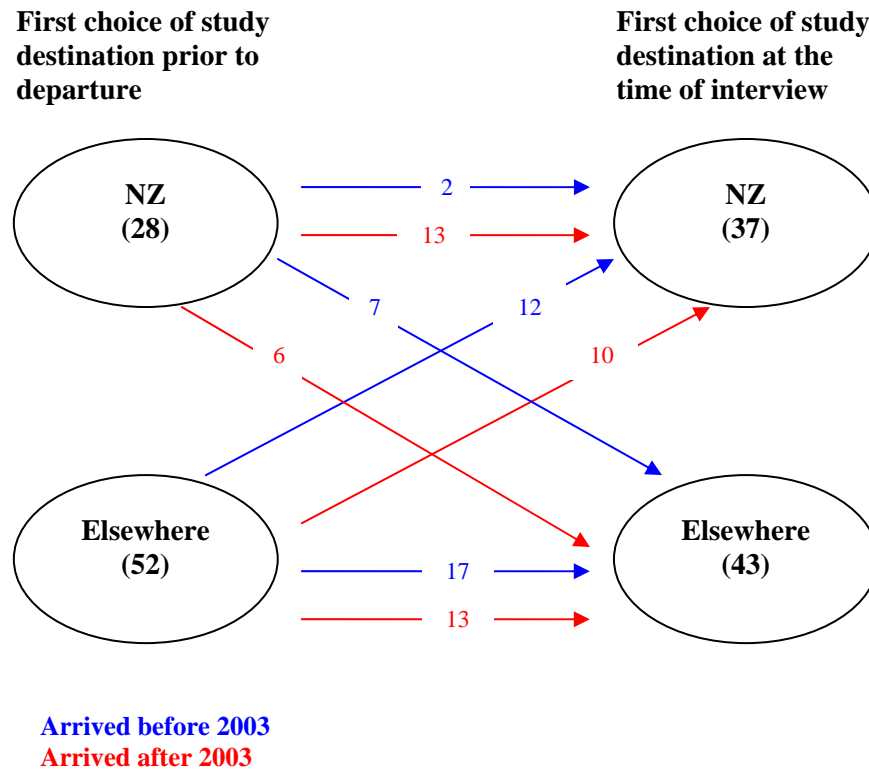


Figure 7 First choice of study destination prior to departure, and at the time of interview

Table 12 Changes in the choice of study destination over time, by year of arrival in New Zealand

First choice of study destination		Time of arrival to New Zealand				Total Participants	
Pre-departure	At time of interview	Before 2003		After 2003		Number	Percent
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
NZ	NZ	2	5.3	13	31.0	15	18.8
Elsewhere	NZ	12	31.6	10	23.8	22	27.5
NZ	Elsewhere	7	18.4	6	14.3	13	16.2
Elsewhere	Elsewhere	17	44.7	13	30.9	30	37.5
Total		38	100	42	100	80	100

Reasons for choosing New Zealand as a study destination

Table 12 shows that 15 out of 80 participants (18.8%) chose New Zealand as their first choice of study destination both before departure and at the time of interview. Favourable living environment, having friends and families in New Zealand, affordable fees and immigration opportunities were among the reasons cited for choosing New Zealand.

Looking back, the expenses are a lot more than my estimation. Yet it is still acceptable. To choose again, I still prefer NZ as the place is tranquil and beautiful which is just the kind that I like. (#18, arrived in 2002)

My target is to read for a PhD. But how can I reach this target? I don't know what's ahead.... I feel like I'm standing at the mid-level of a mountain. If I go back down, I will never be able to see from the top of the mountain. So I have no regret about my choice. (#40, arrived in 2005)

Twenty-two participants (27.5%) did not choose New Zealand as their first choice of study destination before they came, but would choose New Zealand if they were to choose again. Many of them came to New Zealand after their student visa applications to other countries had been rejected. However, after living in New Zealand for some time, they indicated that New Zealand was preferred because of its amicable environment, safety, educational system, and having friends and relatives in the country.

To choose again, I will choose NZ. It's a free country and has a better education system than that of China. (#58, arrived in 2005)

On second thoughts, I will choose NZ. It has opened my mind and my horizons. Worth coming! (#53, arrived in 2005)

On second thoughts, I will pick NZ. Having stayed here for quite some time, I find the environment amicable, orderly and tranquil. On the contrary, I find it difficult to adapt back in China. There are too many people and the air is polluted. (#76, arrived in 2002)

Reasons against choosing New Zealand

Thirteen participants (16.2%) who chose New Zealand before they came now regretted their choice, and would rather choose somewhere else if they were given another opportunity. Half of them came before 2003, when low exchange rates and high success rates for visa applications made New Zealand a relatively attractive study destination. However, exchange rate rises since their arrival have meant that their costs have been higher than originally planned. Further, many participants in this group planned to return to the PRC to find work after completing their studies in New Zealand. They tended to place great emphasis on the ratings of overseas educational institutions.

There are three important considerations for choosing where to study overseas: education quality, job opportunity, and fees and charges. Allow me to choose again, it will not be NZ. The exchange rate is too high. I would rather go to the UK or Canada. (#29, arrived in 1999)

What I most longed for was to learn more from overseas and then go back home to work. But now I find a NZ diploma seems not as useful as I had expected. (#73, arrived in 2005)

Surely NZ is not comparable to the US, UK Australia and Germany. In China, people find Auckland University is not up to Tsing Hua University. (Auckland FG)

The final group comprised 30 participants (37.5%) who indicated that New Zealand was not their first choice of study both before they came, and this perception had not changed after arrival. These participants were generally dissatisfied with the rising exchange rates and perceived low ratings of New Zealand educational institutions. In addition, they revealed a dissonance in their expectations, resulting from inaccurate information provided by agents and other sources. The majority of the participants in this group arrived in New Zealand prior to 2003.

Studying in NZ is no longer cheap. The exchange rate is too high. It doubled. When I first came, the agent told me I could complete the study for RMB350,000. The actual spending now is far beyond this amount. The quality of education is not as good as expected. The teaching quality of some teachers is disappointing. (#06, arrived in 2002)

I won't choose NZ on second thoughts. I would go to Australia. NZ fees are so high compared to those of Australia. Yet its school ranking is not up to Australia. The teaching quality of

University of Waikato is quite good, yet it is still behind that of the US and Australia. (#49, arrived in 2001)

First consideration is the academic reputation. Second consideration is whether citizenship is attainable and third, it is the fees and expenses. To choose again, I wouldn't choose NZ. Its expenses are high. For the same amount of money, we could go to better countries. Moreover, the media have reported a lot on the negative side of overseas students and have portrayed very poor images about us. (#09, arrived in 2002)

I am very dismayed by my agent. First, his business efficiency is low. He spent a whole year applying for a visa for me. And he didn't provide me with accurate information on the schools. For example, University of Waikato is not ranked high. ... To choose again, I wouldn't come because job opportunities are scarce here. The promotion campaign was well done in 2002, which attracted many overseas students. It was an overseas study wave indeed at that time. (#06, arrived in 2002)

Before I thought NZ teachers were the same as Chinese teachers. But teachers here are more like friends. I thought I would make a lot of foreign friends. Actually people around are all Chinese and international students. Before, social and other information told me that people here were very friendly. Actually people here are very conservative. They don't like making friends with outsiders. (#15, arrived in 2001)

Intentions to work and live in New Zealand

In this study, participants were asked about their post-study plans before they arrived in New Zealand, and at the time of interview. Nearly 40 percent of the participants had changed their post-study plans after living in New Zealand for some time. At the time of the research, more participants intended to look for work or apply for permanent residence in New Zealand than had thought they would before arriving here (Figures 8 and 9).

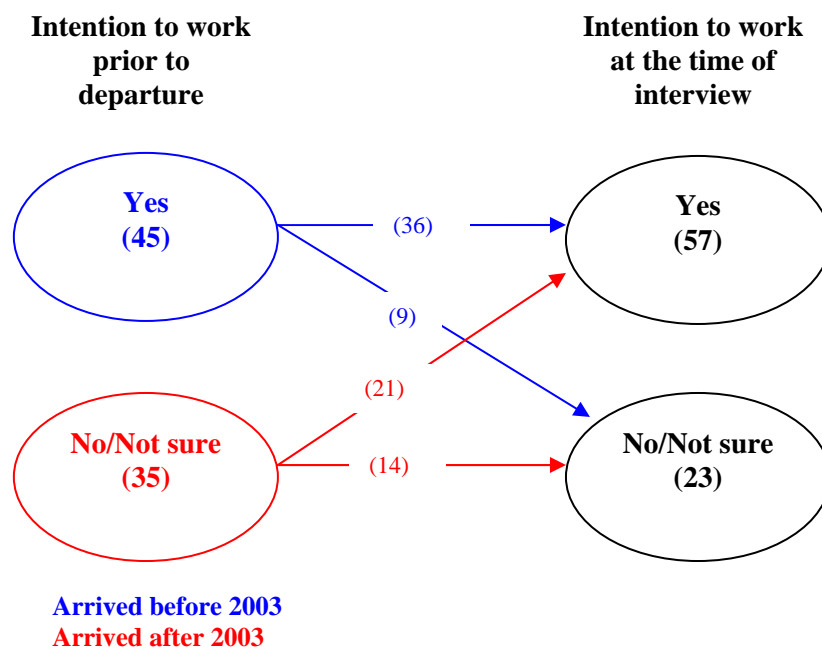


Figure 8 Intentions to work prior to departure and at the time of interview

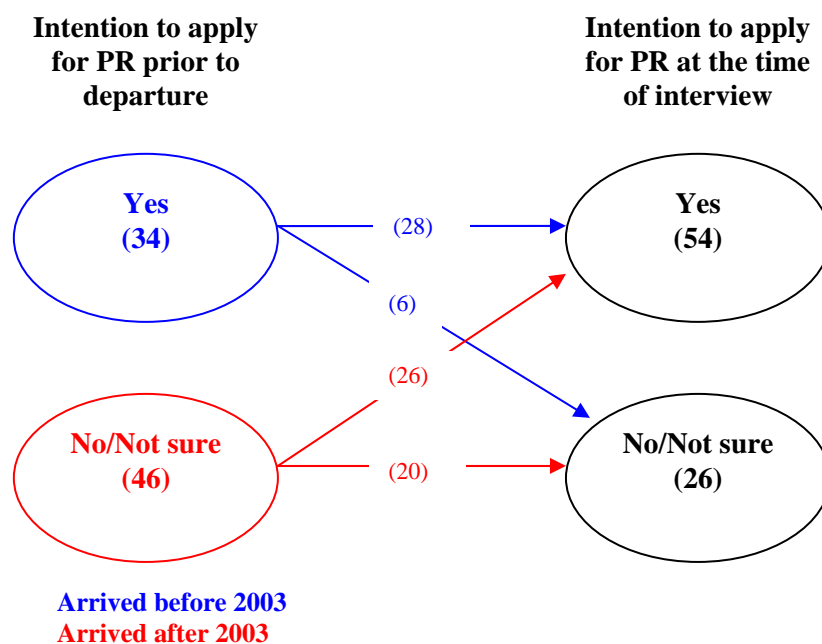


Figure 9 Intentions to apply for permanent residence in New Zealand prior to departure, and at the time of interview

Prior to departure, just over half of the participants in this study (56.2%) had planned to look for work in New Zealand. At the time of interview, 71.3 percent (56 participants) indicated they were intending to apply for work after they finished their studies (Table 12). The percentage planning to apply for permanent residence in New Zealand was 42.5 percent (34 participants) prior to departure, increasing to 67.5 percent (54 participants) at the time of interview.

Table 13 Changes in the intentions to work in New Zealand over time

Intentions to work in New Zealand		Number	Percent
Pre-departure	At time of interview		
Yes	Yes	36	45.0
No/not sure	Yes	21	26.3
Yes	No/not sure	9	11.2
No/not sure	No/not sure	14	17.5
Total		80	100

Table 14 Changes in the intentions to apply for permanent residence in New Zealand over time

Intentions to apply for PR in New Zealand		Number	Percent
Pre-departure	At time of interview		
Yes	Yes	28	35.0
No/not sure	Yes	26	32.5
Yes	No/not sure	6	7.5
No/not sure	No/not sure	20	25.0
Total		80	100

Why plans change

When Chinese international students decided to study in New Zealand, most had expected that an overseas education would give them better job opportunities and better life chances. When this topic was further explored in the focus groups, we found that their views were divided with regard to whether they would have better job opportunities if they stayed behind in New Zealand, or returned to the PRC to work. From the discussions it became evident that the environment for international students both in the PRC and New Zealand had changed during the course of their studies. The perceived advantages or disadvantages of this changing environment, in relation to the participants' future, has prompted many of them to review their plans.

For example, some participants planned to look for work and apply for permanent residence in New Zealand because recent policy initiatives provide international students with a pathway from study to work and then to residence (Bedford and Ho, 2006). From 2005, changes in student policy have also given international students expanded work opportunities while undertaking a full-time course of study. At the time of survey, nearly one-third (32.5%) of the participants had part-time work. Although some worked part-time out of necessity to earn money to contribute to their living costs, many participants said they worked part-time to capitalise on their educational experience and to increase their chance of getting permanent residence.

It seemed I would like to earn some pocket money doing a part-time job. Never thought of whether it would be useful afterwards. But [after working] we have been able to raise our language ability and learn how to deal with people. If the opportunity arises, I will recommend to my fellow schoolmates to work. (Hamilton FG)

I find getting a job is very important. It's because only after you have worked, do you know what is inadequate and what you should learn to enhance yourself. (Christchurch FG)

I had part-time jobs when I was studying. I had no money and needed to work. Work definitely has an adverse impact on study. With more time spent on work, there remains little energy for study. I used to think that working during study was possible and both would not be affected. But now I find it not possible. Work definitely affects study. (Christchurch FG)

Further, a number of participants observed that the value of overseas credentials has diminished in the PRC in recent years as more and more graduates with overseas qualifications have returned home and are looking for employment. Some students who had originally planned to return had changed their mind because they now felt that they would achieve higher salaries and better job opportunities if they stayed in New Zealand.

To find a job in China by our qualification should not be a problem. The pay is about RMB2,000 which is not good. We will be further dissatisfied if compared with NZ where we can support ourselves with a common job. In China, even if we have a job, we can't be self-supporting. (Christchurch FG)

Pay is not high in China. We find it unfair. Psychologically we are imbalanced. We have spent so much money studying overseas and yet, our pay is the same as the in-house graduates. (Hamilton FG)

I asked my dad, "Can I come home to find a job?" He replied, "Don't come back. You won't get a job!" (Christchurch FG)

Overseas students would rather find an appropriate job here in order to stay behind in NZ. In China the competition is keen and the pay is low. (Christchurch FG)

It's easier to find a job here (than in China). Competition is not great here which is incomparable to the heated situation in China. There are many job vacancies here. (Rotorua FG)

However, some participants commented that finding employment in New Zealand was proving much more difficult than they thought it would be prior to arriving here. The issue of language difficulties and a lack of New Zealand experience were the main barriers. The uncertainty of finding employment was a significant source of frustration for some participants who were nearing the completion of their tertiary studies. They were very ambivalent about whether or not they could remain in New Zealand if they were unable to find work.

English is still a great hurdle for job hunting. (Christchurch FG)

During job hunting here, I always get replies like "You don't have commercial experience!" We are fresh graduates, if we can't find the first job, we will never be able to get experience! The vacancies advertisement does not tell us how much experience is needed. (Christchurch FG)

Finding a job here is not as easy as in the US, UK, Australia, and not even as in China. Here, jobs are different in nature from those in China. The jobs here are more practical, e.g. gardening, car repairing, electrician jobs, etc. These technical jobs are welcomed by overseas students because they help in the application for residence. If they don't help, Chinese students won't learn them. (Auckland FG)

Further, immigration policy changes were a cause of concern to some participants intending to apply for permanent residence but who had not yet finished their studies. They said they were constantly worried about policy changes that might decrease their chance of obtaining permanent residency.

I don't feel safe with an immigration policy which tightens and relaxes from time to time. It's unattractive to students in China. At the beginning the agent told us we could settle down after finishing our study. But actually it is not the case. (Auckland FG)

The future plans of international students not only have implications for immigration, but also for the educational sector. When the participants were asked to reflect on the reasons causing the downturn of Chinese international student numbers since 2003, a number of them pointed out that uncertainty over immigration policy changes was a disincentive. Generally, many participants considered that New Zealand had become a less attractive study destination in recent years because of increased competition from Canada, Australia and the UK. Other factors influencing the students' choice of study destination, as discussed in an earlier section, included: high exchange rates, negative media reports, and issues of safety and student protection.

In earlier days people treated overseas study a little blindfolded. Now that people know more and have seen a number of counter examples, they have become more cautious. NZ has also lost its advantage (fees). In addition, there are negative reports on winding down of schools, deaths - hit by student driven cars, etc. (#18, university student, arrived in 2002)

First, the exchange rate is high. Living expenses are very high. Secondly, the environment has changed. It is not as safe as before. Thirdly, it's about education standards. Some schools provide no protection for their students. (#30, PTE student, arrived in 1999)

Reputation is not built in a day. Neither is it ruined in a day. In the beginning NZ had quite a good reputation regarding overseas study. It was its own practices, the government practices, the policy practices and the school practices which ruined the reputation. For example the changes in immigration policy, the tremendous increase in school fees, the frequent changes of teachers, the inadequacy of teaching quality, etc. (#06, university student, arrived in 2002)

There are reasons on the NZ side and there are reasons on the Chinese side too. For the Chinese reasons, it's because Chinese parents have more choices now. NZ is factually a small nation and there is less opportunity. For the NZ reasons, it's because the education standard is not good enough. Moreover, the immigration policy is ever changing. (#40, a PhD candidate in China, preparing for IELTS in a language school, arrived in 2005 for a short stay of four months)

Suggestions by participants to improve New Zealand's reputation as an overseas study destination for Chinese students

As the majority of Chinese international students had very little knowledge about New Zealand prior to their arrival here, their choice of study destination and their post-study plans were able to change dramatically after they had actually experienced studying and living in the country. This research revealed two major factors in relation to the choices Chinese students (and their parents) make when choosing a study destination. These are cost and quality of education. With the strong New Zealand dollar, keen competition from other countries, and increasing emphasis by prospective PRC employers on the international ratings of educational institutions, New Zealand needs to keep its competitive edge in order to attract and retain international students. Below are some suggestions.

NZ is not famous in China. There is not any brand name or special products, or any activities which inspire the Chinese. So there is an added need for promotion to make the younger generation interested in NZ. (Hamilton FG)

To enhance NZ's reputation for Chinese overseas students to choose it as a study destination: a guarantee on teaching quality; the protection of overseas students. (#11)

The Education Department should establish a more systematic policy to help newcomers. This should cover particulars on traffic, finance and everyday life. Information on how schools operate would also be useful. (Auckland FG)

Participants were also concerned about specific media reporting on their community because of the way it influenced the general public's perception of them. Suggestions were made on using the media to present positive images of international students, and promoting mutual understanding between international students and members of the host community.

There should be more positive reporting on overseas study and promises about employment. There should also be more assistance on everyday life. One example is to set up a task force providing health, accommodation, schooling and other information to students. The universities should take the lead to care for the students and put the parents' mind at ease. (#33)

To enhance the public perception on Chinese overseas students: fair reporting! (#11)

We must have mutual understanding. We understand NZ and NZ understands China. I think the Chinese government should put more effort in promoting Chinese culture and broadcast the same to various countries in the world. In this way people will accept and understand us. (#40)

These suggestions will be further discussed in the next chapter, when the Ministry of Education's national survey findings are re-examined in the light of the findings of this research.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research sets out to explore Chinese international students' experiences and perceptions about studying and living in New Zealand, why they might choose to stay or return home, and what might be the fundamental causes of their dissatisfaction with their experiences. The results indicate that there are considerable variations in the background, experiences, and future plans of the Chinese students, and that their evaluations of different aspects of their New Zealand experience (such as education, social relationships, accommodation, and their experience in the city where they reside) are very diverse.

The external environment for international education both in New Zealand and in the PRC has changed considerably in recent years. The overall findings suggest that Chinese students who arrived before 2003 were relatively dissatisfied with their experiences in New Zealand when compared to students who came after 2003. Prior to 2003, Chinese students were attracted to studying in New Zealand because of cheaper costs, and the relative ease in obtaining a student visa. However, exchange rate rises since their arrival have meant that fees and costs have been higher than originally planned. For the students who came after 2003, their choice of New Zealand as a study destination related to aspects such as the quality of education, affordable fees, an amicable environment, immigration opportunities, and having relatives and friends in New Zealand. In general, the cost and quality of education were the two most important factors that Chinese students considered when choosing a study destination.

With regard to educational experiences, Chinese students across the sectors were generally satisfied with their teachers and the teaching and learning approaches in New Zealand. Dissatisfaction mainly arose from dissonance of expectations. The study plans of most of the Chinese students in this research project centred on gaining a bachelor or higher degree in New Zealand. However, most required English language study to fulfil the IELTS requirements to enter universities and polytechnics. Many students under-estimated the time required to acquire the appropriate level of English; therefore they spent a much longer period of time in language schools than they had anticipated. A preliminary analysis of the study pathways chosen showed that most were working towards the study goals they or their families had set for them prior to their arrival in New Zealand, but they would benefit from better information and more guidance to help them choose suitable study pathways.

Chinese students in tertiary institutions experienced more learning difficulties than either high school or language school students. Even though they had met the English language requirements for admission to universities, they reported having to make ongoing language and learning adjustments in order that they could progress through the New Zealand educational system. This required substantive adjustments on their part. The uncertainty about future employment prospects was another area of concern for the tertiary students. The findings indicate that Chinese students' views were divided with regard to whether they would have better job opportunities if they remained in New Zealand, or returned to the PRC to work. This is because the job markets for returning students in the PRC have become much more competitive in recent years. Some students who planned to return were dissatisfied because they believed that the value of their overseas credentials had diminished and this might mean they would be unable to find a job back home when their studies were completed. Among those who intended to stay to find work after they had completed their studies, some had dissonance of expectations because they were unprepared for the difficulties they faced when seeking employment. Language competency and a lack of New Zealand experience were the main barriers to finding employment.

The majority of Chinese students knew very little about New Zealand before they arrived. Mostly, they looked forward to greater freedom in New Zealand. However, these expectations were often not met because they were lonely and homesick here, especially during the first few months. While some

students remained reliant on their parents back home for emotional and financial support, most had sought out support from other networks in New Zealand, especially from Chinese friends. Generally, Chinese students found it difficult to make friends with New Zealanders because of language and cultural differences. Most also displayed limited knowledge and usage of services and facilities provided at educational institutions, as well as limited participation in the wider community.

Most Chinese students lodged in homestays when they arrived, but their homestay experiences were very varied. Not surprisingly, negative homestay experiences contributed to low ratings of satisfaction as those memories had coloured these participants' views of New Zealand. Apart from cost, intercultural issues were a major reason why Chinese students moved out of homestays to go flatting. However, not all students were prepared to accept the responsibilities that went with flatting – such as dealing with daily chores and paying all the bills themselves. Many of the students reported wanting to see the quality of homestay services improved, as the homestay was considered to be potentially an important source of social support for young students, as well as a resource for learning about New Zealand life. Currently, even among those who enjoyed good relationships with their homestay families, the availability of social support from their homestay was very limited.

Over the duration of their stay in New Zealand, many Chinese students had moved from one city to another to maximise opportunities for study and work. At the time of the research, they reported no major dissatisfaction with the city in which they resided. Chinese students also changed their post-study plans over time, and as a result more students intended to look for work and apply for residence in New Zealand than had originally anticipated doing so prior to arrival. Finally, Chinese students' views towards their preferred study destination are also changing. As the PRC is a leading source country of international students in New Zealand, it is important to continue research with this group to understand and address their concerns, and to enhance New Zealand's competitive edge to attract and retain these students.

In conclusion, the following major recommendations emerged from this research.

Pre-departure recommendations

1. Before departure, encourage Chinese international students to cherish an international study abroad experience.

The participants had minimal understanding of the social and cultural life of their New Zealand peers. Before departure, students should be provided with training and briefing materials to raise awareness of what to expect as part of a study abroad experience. This might also include information about the intercultural competence they would require to be effective in the social and learning environment. The industry has an opportunity here to develop materials and provide guidelines that would result in Chinese students' better intercultural awareness.

2. Provide better preparation to families about the homestay experience, and more accurate information about costs and general living expenses.

While participants generally considered the homestay experience a useful starting point for acculturation into New Zealand, these participants and their families appeared to know little about the realities of homestay life prior to departure. Therefore, students were unprepared and not equipped to face the challenges of family life in New Zealand. As many of them came from one-child families, they were not used to family interactions and responsibilities, or the cultural differences that exist between their own and the New Zealand way. Better information needs to be provided to families and prospective Chinese international students so that they know what to expect and experience, in particular, sharing household duties, respecting rules and patterns of family life, and participating in family social times.

3. Provide more information and guidance to help students choose suitable study pathways in New Zealand, especially in relation to the transition from language school to tertiary education.

The participants in this study were sometimes ill-informed, or had unrealistic expectations about study pathways, in particular, the length of time required to meet IELTS and other course of study requirements. There is scope here to provide clearer and more realistic pre-departure information to parents and prospective students about the realities of English language acquisition, such as the length of time required to pass the IELTS test, and the further pathways required before entering a tertiary institution. Difficulty in gaining these entry levels also needs to be put into the context of the extra burden Chinese students face in learning to live and study in a foreign country. Furthermore, the IELTS examination process recommends **ongoing study of English language** beyond the requirements expected of tertiary institutions. Institutions need to take responsibility in implementing this recommendation by providing English language programmes, which might also be credit bearing, alongside mainstream academic programmes of study.

Recommendations to enhance the quality of the learning experience of Chinese students

4. Promote cultural inclusiveness and intercultural interactions in the classroom, including strategies for more effective communication.

Where classroom interactions are concerned, Chinese and other students, including New Zealand students, need greater opportunities for developing learning and personal relationships. Without adequate attention to the social-cultural-emotional climate of the classroom, the supposed benefits of internationalisation (cultural exchange and intercultural learning) will not take place. Institutions need to take care in developing policies and practices that transcend a focus on curriculum to allow time to foster such relationships. Student-focused and co-constructed learning activities, already the hallmark of New Zealand education, need to be carefully developed and monitored to ensure that intercultural communication is taking place. Programmes for developing **intercultural responsibility** in the New Zealand classroom, which includes intercultural competence, and citizenship education in order to develop students' critical cultural awareness would be useful in improving intercultural interactions among students from all cultures, and in particular, with Chinese students.

5. Provide institutional support for teachers.

Given these participants' perceptions about declining education quality in New Zealand, compared to that of the US, UK, Canada, and Australia, more investment needs to be made into providing teachers with training and support in managing multicultural classrooms with growing numbers of Chinese students. Guidance and training, most notably at tertiary level, might include: internationalising the curriculum; promoting intercultural communication through group work; and using teaching and assessment strategies that accommodate Chinese students, and others' learning styles. Furthermore, teachers need to be prepared to meet the mismatches in expectations Chinese students have about education and learning in western institutions (see for example, Ransom, 2006).

6. Promote cultural inclusiveness on campus.

The participants pointed out the difficulty, arising from their socialisation in the PRC, that they face in finding opportunities to make friends with New Zealand students. Tertiary education campuses appeared to be more problematic places for Chinese students than language or secondary schools in accommodating Chinese students' social needs. Jiang (2006), for instance, points to the responsibilities institutions in New Zealand face in developing a policy of internationalisation—one that respects interculturality. Institutions, both at the level of the international office (see, for example, work being done by the University of Adelaide's International Office) and within faculties, need to

develop activities that include Chinese students. Such programmes need to be communicated appropriately to them (i.e., taking into account Chinese students' shyness in joining an "unknown circle", pp. 37-38). Other programmes, such as Excell,⁸ train all students to reflect on intercultural interactions. This programme is a useful resource that a greater number of institutions could utilise to promote intercultural communication.

7. Explore the potential for twinning programmes.

Twinning programmes, where students undertake the initial part of their study in the PRC, would attract Chinese students who have greater preparation for learning in a new cultural environment. The use of a buddy system (between prospective Chinese students in the PRC and New Zealand students) might provide a useful pre-departure orientation as well as develop intercultural awareness between the two groups. While some of the participants in this study were on twinning programmes, more research is required to explore their effectiveness in preparing such students for study in New Zealand. The education industry would also benefit from research into best practice for developing and ensuring the continuity of these partnerships.

Recommendations to enhance Chinese students' living and socio-cultural experiences

8. Improve homestay services to ensure they are a source of social support for young students who are living away from home for the first time.

Homestay experiences, according to these participants, provided initial and first-hand experience of the host culture. Thus, the importance of a quality homestay experience cannot be over-emphasised. Participants' accounts suggest that homestays largely do not meet their expectations and many need careful vetting and monitoring. Homestay families need better guidance on how to accommodate Chinese students who have come from a very different living and family context. In some instances, there may be a need to better train and monitor homestay accommodation. The objectives of prospective homestay hosts also need careful examination to ensure that they align with industry expectations about the homestay experience.

9. Engage, encourage, and promote Chinese student participation in the wider community.

Most of the participants in this study appeared to be sharing flats with co-nationals. The findings point to the isolation and exclusion of Chinese students from the host community. While better pre-departure preparation (as suggested in #1) might help to alleviate this situation, there is scope for institutions to offer pathways to Chinese students to enhance their community involvement and participation. Providing information and opportunities to engage in voluntary work, part-time employment, and student work experience schemes are all examples of ways in which Chinese students might be encouraged to participate in the wider community.

10. Address issues of safety and protection of students.

While much is being done at community level to help Chinese students deal with health and safety issues, these services need to be more widely available and accessible to students who live beyond the main centres, such as Auckland and Christchurch.

⁸ See Chapter 7, Ho, Holmes, & Cooper (2004, pp. 58-58) for a description of the Excell programme and studies that have evaluated it.

Future industry directions

11. Undertake further research into work opportunities for and employment of Chinese graduates in New Zealand

Many of the participants, through a range of pathways, were either completing or planned to complete a tertiary course of study, and then eventually seek permanent residence and employment in New Zealand. While some of these students had had part time work experiences, little is yet known about Chinese graduates' pathways into and contributions within the New Zealand workforce. While there is much hearsay and popular media discussion of Chinese (graduate) students experiencing forms of discrimination in the workplace, the extent of their experiences in employment acquisition, vocational choice, and interaction in the workplace are unknown. This research would be useful in providing useful information about pathways and course choices Chinese students might take to enhance their career opportunities in New Zealand after study, as well as the extent of their cultural inclusion in New Zealand society as a result of their education here. The research is particularly important given the Ministry of Education's recent policy change in admitting non-fee paying international students into doctoral programmes. New Zealand may not be capitalising on the skills these Chinese graduates can offer.

12. Undertake further research to assist with policy development and planning.

The current political landscape in New Zealand has resulted in numerous changes to policies regarding immigration, permanent residence, work permits, and visa requirements. These changes have led to confusion among students about their entitlements and opportunities beyond their planned programme of study. The industry needs to have systems in place to advise prospective and New Zealand-based Chinese international students so they can make informed decisions about their future paths and careers. Many would like to contribute to New Zealand society through work, but are either unsure or unaware of the opportunities they have, or their entitlements. Ongoing research that monitors potential (PRC-based) and current Chinese students' perceptions and experiences is important in keeping the industry informed of changing trends in the market. Furthermore, the industry needs to carefully monitor how New Zealand institutions market themselves to prospective Chinese students and deliver on their programmes; it may need to offer guidance where necessary.

13. Use the media to promote positive images of international students.

The media need to respond to the negative images of Chinese international students, and people of Asian descent generally, by showcasing positive stories of Chinese students, including their contributions to New Zealand society through their social engagement and participation in various organisations, by profiling their employment contributions, and through case studies of successful graduates in research, entrepreneurial, and employment positions.

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1. Choosing New Zealand as an overseas study destination

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- “坚决不去新西兰留学的十大原因” (“Top ten reasons for definitely not going to study in New Zealand”), posted on 23 May 2001, retrieved on November 2005, from ww.tigtag.com/community/basic/6475_8_6.html
- “驳斥/解释 SCOTT 的“坚决不去新西兰留学的十大原因”” (“A rebuttal/interpretation on SCOTT’s ‘Top ten reasons for definitely not going to study in New Zealand’”), posted on 23 May 2001, retrieved on November 2005, from ww.tigtag.com/community/basic/6476_8_6.html
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2. Overseas study experiences in New Zealand

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- “一个新移民对新西兰的看法” (“New Zealand in the eyes of a new immigrant”), posted on 25 March 2001, retrieved on November 2005, from ww.tigtag.com/community/immigration/4768_4_5.html
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- “新西兰留学和移民个人经验和感受” (“Personal experience and feeling as an overseas student and immigrant in New Zealand”), posted on 15 December 2003, retrieved on November 2005, from ww.tigtag.com/community/basic/26165_8_6.html

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“新西兰斥令列出优良学校清单” (“New Zealand orders for a full list of good schools”), posted on 13 November 2003, retrieved November 2005, from ww.tigtag.com/community/basic/25439_8_1.html

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Appendix 2 Participant list

ID	Gender	Age	Year of Arrival	Current Residence	Educational Institution	Living Arrangement	Work in NZ
1	M	24	2003	Hamilton	Polytechnic	Homestay	No
2	M	20	2002	Hamilton	Polytechnic	Flatting	No
3	F	25	2001	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
4	M	28	2002	Hamilton	PTE	Flatting	Yes
5	M	26	2003	Hamilton	University	Flatting	Yes
6	M	24	2002	Hamilton	Polytechnic	Flatting	Yes
7	F	26	2002	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
8	M	27	2002	Hamilton	University	Flatting	Yes
9	F	24	2002	Hamilton	University	Boarding	Yes
10	F	24	2001	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
11*	F	23	2002	Christchurch	University	Flatting	No
12	M	23	2001	Christchurch	University	Flatting	Yes
13*	F	23	2000	Christchurch	University	Flatting	Yes
14*	M	28	2001	Christchurch	University	Flatting	Yes
15*	M	25	2001	Christchurch	University	Flatting	No
16*	M	22	2001	Christchurch	University	Boarding	Yes
17	F	23	2002	Christchurch	University	Flatting	No
18	M	22	2002	Christchurch	University	Flatting	No
19	F	22	2002	Christchurch	University	Boarding	No
20	M	22	2003	Christchurch	University	Flatting	No
21	F	21	2001	Christchurch	University	Flatting	No
22	M	24	2001	Christchurch	University	Flatting	Yes
23	M	24	2002	Christchurch	University	Flatting	Yes
24	M	20	2004	Christchurch	Secondary	Flatting	No
25	F	20	2003	Christchurch	Secondary	Boarding	No
26	F	19	2002	Christchurch	Secondary	Flatting	No
27	M	23	2001	Auckland	Polytechnic	Flatting	Yes
28	F	21	2002	Auckland	PTE	Hostel	No
29	M	24	1999	Auckland	University	Flatting	Yes
30	M	25	1999	Auckland	PTE	Flatting	Yes
31	M	25	2004	Auckland	PTE	Boarding	Yes
32	M	24	2002	Auckland	PTE	Flatting	No
33	M	21	2004	Hamilton	Polytechnic	Flatting	Yes
34	F	23	2001	Hamilton	Polytechnic	Boarding	No
35	F	22	2001	Hamilton	Polytechnic	Flatting	Yes
36	M	21	2003	Hamilton	Polytechnic	Boarding	Yes
37*	F	26	2006	Auckland	Language	Flatting	No
38	F	18	2005	Auckland	Language	Homestay	No
39*	F	31	2005	Auckland	Language	Sister's home	No
40*	F	33	2005	Auckland	Language	Boarding	No
41*	M	17	2006	Auckland	Language	Homestay	No
42	M	20	2004	Auckland	Language	Flatting	No
43	M	18	2005	Auckland	Language	Homestay	No
44	M	18	2005	Auckland	Language	Homestay	No
45	M	20	2003	Auckland	University	Flatting	No
46	F	22	2005	Auckland	PTE	Flatting	No
47	F	24	2003	Hamilton	Polytechnic	Flatting	No
48	M	24	2000	Hamilton	Polytechnic	Flatting	Yes
49	M	23	2001	Hamilton	University	Flatting	Yes
50	F	23	2001	Hamilton	University	Flatting	Yes
51	M	24	2002	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
52	M	29	2002	Hamilton	University	Flatting	Yes
53	F	22	2005	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
54	F	25	2003	Hamilton	University	Boarding	No
55	M	25	2002	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No

ID	Gender	Age	Year of Arrival	Current Residence	Educational Institution	Living Arrangement	Work in NZ
56	F	23	2003	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
57	F	23	2002	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
58	M	17	2005	Auckland	Secondary	Homestay	No
59	M	17	2004	Auckland	Secondary	Homestay	No
60	F	17	2005	Auckland	Secondary	Homestay	No
61	M	18	2005	Auckland	Secondary	Homestay	Yes
62	M	17	2004	Auckland	Secondary	Homestay	No
63	M	16	2006	Auckland	Secondary	Homestay	No
64	M	18	2004	Auckland	Secondary	Homestay	No
65	F	21	2001	Auckland	University	Boarding	No
66	F	21	2003	Auckland	University	Boarding	No
67*	F	17	2006	Rotorua	Language	Homestay	No
68*	F	18	2006	Rotorua	Language	Homestay	No
69	M	20	2005	Rotorua	Language	Homestay	No
70	M	18	2005	Rotorua	Language	Flatting	No
71*	M	21	2005	Rotorua	Language	Flatting	No
72*	F	24	2005	Rotorua	Polytechnic	Provided by employer	Yes
73*	F	24	2005	Rotorua	Polytechnic	Homestay	Yes
74	F	17	2003	Rotorua	Secondary	Homestay	No
75	M	19	2005	Rotorua	Secondary	Flatting	No
76	F	23	2002	Rotorua	Polytechnic	Flatting	Yes
77	F	22	2002	Rotorua	Polytechnic	Uncle's home	No
78*	M	23	2005	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
79*	F	22	2005	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
80*	M	23	2005	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
81**	M	33	2006	Auckland	Polytechnic	Sister's home	No
82**	F	21	2006	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No
83**	M	22	2006	Hamilton	University	Flatting	No

* Participated in both interview and focus group.

** Participated in focus group only.

Appendix 3 Information sheet for research participants

Research on “The experiences of Chinese International Students in New Zealand”

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Background

This project is contracted by Education New Zealand and funded by the Export Education Levy. It will be carried out by Dr Elsie Ho (Project Leader), Ms Wendy Li (Project Co-ordinator) and research staff from the Migration Research Group of the University of Waikato. Over the past few years there has been sharp growth and decline in the number of Chinese international students attending educational institutions in New Zealand. Specifically, the lifting of the quotas set by New Zealand for students from China in 1999 contributed to the rapid growth in Chinese student numbers between 1999 and 2003. Yet since 2003, the numbers of Chinese international students have declined. The purpose of this project is to provide qualitative research into the experiences of Chinese international students in order to identify issues of concern for Chinese students about living and studying in New Zealand.

Objectives

- i. To explore Chinese international students' learning expectations, and their level of satisfaction with their life, accommodation, home-stay arrangements, social support and academic progress in New Zealand;
- ii. To identify the fundamental causes of Chinese students' dissatisfaction with their experience in New Zealand;
- iii. To examine factors influencing Chinese students' intentions to remain in New Zealand after completion of their current course of studies; and
- iv. To propose practical solutions to the problems identified by the research.

Methods

We will use interviews and focus groups to explore the expectations, perceptions and experiences of Chinese students. The target groups are Chinese international students from different language schools, polytechnics, universities and secondary schools in Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton and Rotorua.

Your involvement

Your name has been provided to us as a potential participant of this research. Individual interviews will be carried out face-to-face, each lasting for about one to one-and-a-half hours. If you are involved in a focus group, each focus group will have 5-10 participants and will last for about 2 hours. If you require an interview schedule, it will be sent to you prior to the interview. All interviews will take place at times and in places mutually convenient to those being interviewed and where privacy can be guaranteed. With your permission, the interview may be audio-taped to aid in putting together the information.

Participants' rights

All participants will have the right to:

- decline to participate;
- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study within two weeks of interview;
- decline to the interview being audio-taped;
- ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time;
- ask for the erasure of any materials they do not wish to be used in any reports of this study; and
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.

Confidentiality

Your answers will be treated completely confidentially. Unless your permission is obtained, your name or any other identifying characteristics of you and the educational institution you attend will not be disclosed in any of the written reports produced in the course of the research. Data will be destroyed five years after the completion of the research.

The results

A report summarising the findings from the interviews and focus groups will be prepared for Education New Zealand at the end of the project.

Anticipated benefits of the research

This research will assist the export education sector to develop programmes, initiatives and strategies to improve educational, pastoral and social support services to international students.

If you have any queries about this study, please feel free to contact us.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Yours sincerely

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Appendix 4 Information sheet for research participants (Chinese translation)



“中国留学生在新西兰的经历”研究项目

给参加研究者的资料页

背景

这一研究项目的经费来自教育出口税收，由新西兰教育信托会（Education NZ Trust）统筹。它将由何式怡博士（项目领导者），利文女士（项目协调员）和怀卡托大学移民研究小组的研究人员共同完成。在过去的几年里，急剧增长和急剧下降的新西兰中国留学生数目引人注目。其中，1999年新西兰提高中国留学生配额对1999年至2003年留学生数目剧增起了很大的推动作用。然而，从2003年起，中国留学生数目开始下降。这个研究项目旨在对新西兰中国留学生的经历进行研究，以确认在新西兰生活和学习的中国留学生所关注和面临的问题。

目的

1. 探讨中国留学生在新西兰的学习期望值、生活满意度、住宿、寄宿家庭的安排、社会支持和学业进展情况；
2. 确认引起中国留学生对新西兰留学经历不满意的主要原因；
3. 探讨影响中国留学生完成当前的学业后是否留居新西兰的因素；以及
4. 对研究所确认的问题提出实际可行的解决方案。

方法

我们将运用访谈和专题小组的方法对中国留学生的期望值、感觉和经历进行探索。本研究的目标小组为在奥克兰、基督城、汉密尔顿和罗托鲁阿四个城市的语言学校、理工学院、大学和中学学习的中国留学生。

你的参与

作为一个留学生，你是这个研究项目的可能参加者。个别访谈将是面对面的，时间将持续一小时至一个半小时左右。如果你还参与专题小组，每个专题小组将有 5-10 个人参加讨论，讨论时间为2小时左右。我们将给予每个参加者20元汽油补贴。如果你要求我们提供访谈内容，我们将在访谈前向你提供资料。所有访谈都将安排在对于访谈双方或多方都方便的时间和地点，所有访谈均为保密。在你的许可下，访谈将进行录音，目的是保持信息的完整性。

研究参与者的权利

所有参加者都有以下权利：

- 拒绝参与；
- 拒绝回答任何个别问题；
- 访谈两周内退出研究；
- 拒绝访谈录音；
- 任何时候要求返还访谈录音资料；
- 要求删除任何他们不希望被用于研究报告的资料；以及
- 在参与过程的任何时候提出任何问题，并要求解答。

隐私保密

你的所有回答都将绝对保密。除非有你的许可，否则，在研究过程中和研究报告里，不会出现任何可以确认你的身份和你就读的学校资料。所有资料将在研究完成后五年销毁。

结果

研究完成后，研究小组将在总结访谈和专题小组的调查结果的基础上，向新西兰教育信托会（Education New Zealand Trust）提交一份报告。

研究的期望利益

此研究将帮助教育出口部门发展项目、采取行动和制定策略，以提高对留学生的教育、指引和社会支持服务质量。

如果你有任何问题，请随时联络我们。

谢谢你对此邀请的考虑。

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Appendix 5 Consent form

Research on “The experiences of Chinese International Students in New Zealand”

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this research project, “The experiences of Chinese international students in New Zealand”. The purpose of the research is to identify issues of concern for Chinese international students about living and studying in New Zealand and to propose practical solutions to the problems identified by the research. A report summarising the findings of the study will be prepared for Education New Zealand at the end of the project.

I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and that I have the rights to withdraw from the study at any time, and to decline to answer any individual questions in the study.

I understand that my participation in this study is confidential. Without my prior consent, no material which could identify me will be used in any reports on this study.

I understand the information shared within the focus group should be kept confidential.

I consent to my interview being audio-taped YES / NO

“I agree to participate in this interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form.”

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 6 Consent form (Chinese translation)

“中国留学生在新西兰的经历”研究项目

同意书

我同意参加“中国留学生在新西兰的经历”这一研究项目。这个研究项目的目的在于确认在新西兰居住和学习的中国留学生所关心的问题以及对研究中所确认的问题提出切实可行的解决方案。研究结束后，研究小组将在总结访谈和专题小组的调查结果的基础上，向新西兰教育信托会（Education New Zealand Trust）提交一份报告。

我明白参加这个研究项目是自愿的。我有权利随时退出这个研究项目，也有权利拒绝回答任何个别问题。

我明白在这个研究项目中，我的参与是绝对保密的。没有我事前的同意，这一研究中的任何报告不能出现任何能确认我的身份的资料。

我明白在专题小组里讨论的内容是保密的。

我同意对这次访谈进行录音。

同意 / 不同意

“我同意参加这次访谈，并且收到这份同意书的复印件。”

签名：

日期：

Appendix 7 Interview guide

Research on “The experiences of Chinese International Students in NZ”

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Opening the interview

- Self introduction
- Explain purpose of interview
- Outline topics that will be discussed
- Explain purpose of tape recording
- Assure anonymity and remind the participants of their right to decline
- Obtain informed consent and have the participants sign the consent form
- Ask the participants to fill in the Personal Data Sheet

2. Follow-up questions to the Personal Data Sheet

Go through the completed Personal Data Sheet and note the changes that had taken place since the participant first studied in NZ as an international student (e.g. courses completed, moving to a different city to live, changes in educational institutions attended, changes in living arrangements, etc.)

- Probe participants’ responses towards these changes and fill any gaps in information

3. Pre-arrival expectations

Show a card giving the four topics to be discussed under “Pre-arrival expectations”

A. Making a choice about where to study

- What were the reasons for choosing New Zealand as a study destination?
- Who made the decision?
- Was NZ your first choice as a place of study?
If “yes,” why?
If “no”, which country was your first choice? Why?
- How do you feel about the reasons for choosing NZ as a study destination **now**?
- Looking back, what are the three most important things you should consider in choosing a study destination?
- If you are free to choose again, would you choose to study in NZ? Why or why not?

B. Getting information about NZ

From the Personal Data Sheet, note whether the participant had visited NZ before becoming an international student. If “No”, go to next question.

- If “Yes”,
 - What were your impressions of NZ at that time?
 - What information did you get from this visit that is useful for you as an international student in NZ now?
- Did you use an agent to help you find a place to study in NZ? If “No”, go to next question. If “Yes”, what types of information and services were provided? Which were the most useful?
- How easy or difficult was it to get information about NZ before you came here?
- Where did you go to get information? (e.g. my teacher, education fair, internet)
- What types of information were the most useful? Where did you get the information?
- What types of information were not accurate? Where did you get the information?
- What types of information were not available?

C. Perceptions of New Zealand

- What were the things you looked forward to when you had made the choice of going to NZ to study?
- What perception did you have of study in New Zealand before coming here?
 - the physical environment, climate
 - the teaching, learning programmes
 - teachers (lecturers)
 - NZ students
 - the social environment
- Were these perceptions accurate or not? Which aspects were different?

D. Your study plans in NZ

- Before coming to NZ, how many years did you plan to stay in NZ?
- What was the highest qualification you expected to get?
- When you finish your studies, would you be looking for jobs in NZ?
- Did you plan to apply for permanent residency (PR)?
- Were these plans similar to your parents’/spouse’s expectations? Which aspects were different?

4. The ladder scale

Show a picture of a ladder with ten rungs.

Here is a picture of a ladder with ten rungs. Suppose we say the top of the ladder (*pointing*) represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you.

- Where on the ladder (*moving finger rapidly up and down ladder*) do you feel you personally stand at the present time?
- Where on the ladder would you say you stood when you were in NZ in the first three months?
- Where do you think you will be on the ladder three years from now?
- Was there a time since you came to New Zealand that you thought you were at the very bottom of the ladder? If “yes” when was it? Why were you feeling that down? How did you overcome your problems?

5. Feelings on quality of life in New Zealand

Note the participant’s answers to Question 4 and get an impression of whether the participants are feeling better or worse than they remembered it had been at the time of arrival in NZ.

- What were the things you found most difficult to cope with in your first three months in NZ?
- Summarise the concerns, e.g. English language; loneliness; making friends; homesickness; NZ ways of life.
Explore **each** concern:
 - Do you still have any problems with this concern now?
 - What steps did you take to overcome these problems?
- At present, what are the things that you are most satisfied with in NZ?
- What are the things that you are most dissatisfied with?
- Do you like living in (Auckland/Christchurch/Hamilton/Tauranga)?
Would you choose this city to study and live in again?

6. Living arrangements

From the Personal Data Sheet note the participants’ current living arrangements and whether they had lived in other types of accommodation before.

- Ask the participants to describe their current living arrangements (type – homestay, hostel; fees; relationship with others in the household, etc.)
- How satisfied are you with your current accommodation?
- What aspects of your current accommodation are you most satisfied with?
- What aspects of your accommodation are you least satisfied with?
- If the participants had lived in other types of accommodation before, ask them to compare the things they like or dislike living in different types of accommodation.

7. Educational experiences

A. Learning experiences

- Did you come across any difficulties in your studies during the first three months? If “Yes”, what were they?
- Do you still have the problems you encountered in the first three months **now**?
- What steps did you take to overcome these problems?
- How difficult are these educational activities for you?
Show a card showing a list of the following educational activities.
 - Understanding teachers/lectures
 - Writing assignments
 - Taking notes during class
 - Completing assignments on time
 - Working on group projects
 - Taking tests or exams
 - Making oral presentations
 - Managing your study workload
 - Asking questions in class
 - Thinking critically
 - Expressing yourself in English
 - Expressing your opinions to your teacher/lecturer
 - Studying in a different educational system
- For those activities that are considered to be difficult/very difficult, encourage the participants to talk about what their experiences were like.
- Overall, how well are you doing in your studies in NZ?

B. Educational support services

- What types of educational support services are available at your school/institution?
If the participants can't name any, remind them of some services like: International Student Office; Student orientation services; Health services; Accommodation services; Counselling services; Language laboratories; “Buddy” or mentor programmes; Sports and Recreational facilities; Clubs and societies.
- What services have you used? How useful are they?

8. Relationship with people in the community

- How easy or difficult is it for you to make friends in NZ?
- How many close friends do you have now? What is their ethnic composition?
- Have you made any NZ friends? How often do you interact with them?
- Do you belong to or attend any clubs or associations? Do you do voluntary work?
- Have you personally experienced any sign of prejudice in NZ? If “yes”, give details of the occasion(s).

9. Social support

- Who can you count on for help or support for each activity listed below:
Show a card giving a list of the following activities:
 - Talk with you if you are upset or troubled
 - Comfort you when you are lonely or homesick
 - Listen to you when you need to talk
 - Help you when you are sick
 - Discuss relationship issues or concerns with you
 - Provide information about sexual health and reproduction
 - Give useful suggestions that help you avoid making mistakes
 - Help you with language or communication problems
 - Help with educational issues or problems
 - Help with your living arrangements
- How often do you turn to your parents for help or support? Why or why not?

10. Future plans

Remind the participants of their answers to Question 3D (their study plans in NZ prior to arrival).

- Are you doing what you had planned before you came to NZ?
- If “No”, what have changed? Why?
- At present, how many years do you plan to stay in NZ?
- What is the highest qualification you expect to get?
- Would you be looking for jobs in NZ after you finish your studies?
- Do you intend to apply for PR in NZ?

11. Suggestions and recommendations

- In the Participants’ Information Sheet you will have noted that the number of international students from China has declined since 2003. What do you think are the main reasons for this downturn?
For participants who had come to NZ before 2003, ask if they are aware of the declining numbers and encourage them to explore the reasons why some of their friends had left or are no longer coming to study.
- Some people consider that the turndown was caused in part by negative media publicity on the experiences of Chinese international students.
 - Do you agree or disagree with this observation?
 - Have you read these negative media reports/articles yourself? Where did you read them (in China or in NZ)? What were reported? What are the impacts of these articles on the Chinese student population in NZ?
 - Have you read any positive media reports on Chinese international students? What are they? Where did you read them?
- What specific examples / suggestions can you give:
 - to improve NZ’s reputation as a study destination for Chinese students?
 - to improve NZ public’s perception of Chinese students?

- to improve the integration of Chinese students in NZ schools and society?
- to improve educational, pastoral and community support services for international students?
- Any other suggestions?

12. Closing the interview

- Thank the participant for taking part in the interview
- Inform the participant that a follow-up focus group interview will be held (give date of meeting) to feed back the findings from these interviews and to explore with them further on practical solutions to the problems identified by the research.
- Ask the participants to consider joining a focus group and how they can contact us for further information.

Appendix 8 Personal data sheet

Research on “The experiences of Chinese International Students in NZ”

PERSONAL DATA SHEET

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Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. Before starting the interview, we would like to ask you a few questions which are necessary to establish a demographic profile of the participants.

For most questions, you are asked to tick [] ONE answer. In some questions, you are asked to tick as many answers as apply, or write your answers in the space provided.

If you do not want to answer any question, please write R (standing for "Refusal") beside the question. If any question does not apply to you, please choose the "Not Applicable" answer choice.

Please note that all the information you give in this questionnaire and in the interview will be completely confidential. No one will be personally identified when the results of the study are reported.

1. Your age: _____ years

2. Your gender: [] Male
[] Female

3. In which city in China were you born? _____

4. What is your marital status?
[] Unmarried
[] Married
[] de facto relationship
[] Other (please specify) _____

5. What is your religion?
[] No religion
[] Buddhist
[] Christian
[] Catholic
[] Other (please specify) _____

6. In what year did you first study in NZ as an international student? _____

How old were you? _____

In which city did you live? _____

What was the type of educational institution you attended at that time?

- Secondary school
- Polytechnic/Institute of Technology
- University
- Other tertiary institution
- Private language school
- Other (Please specify) _____

Did you have relatives and/or other family members living in NZ at that time?

- Yes
- No

If "yes", which family members were in NZ? (Please tick all boxes that apply)

- Parent
- Husband/Wife
- Child
- Brother/Sister
- Other (please specify) _____

7. Had you visited NZ before you enrolled as an international student?

- Yes
- No

If "yes", in which year? _____

What type of visa (e.g. visitor visa) had you got to enter NZ? _____

8. Before coming to NZ, what was your highest level of education?

Please give the name of the educational institution you attended to gain this qualification.

Other than China and NZ, had you studied in any other country?

- Yes
- No

If "yes", in which country(ies)? _____

9. Before coming to NZ, had you worked in any country (including China)?

- Yes
- No

If "yes", in which country(ies)? _____

Give the occupation(s) or position(s) that you had worked before coming to NZ.

10. At present, in which city in NZ are you living and studying? _____
 How long have you been living in this city? _____ years _____ months
 How long have you been living in NZ? _____ years _____ months
11. What is the type of educational institution in which you are currently studying?
 Secondary school
 Polytechnic/Institute of Technology
 University
 Other tertiary institution
 Private language school
 Other (Please specify) _____
12. Please give details of the course that you are currently studying:
 Type of course (e.g. Year 12, Bachelor of Commerce) _____
 Name of institution (e.g. AUT) _____
 Year started: _____
 Expected completion date: _____
 This is: a full-time course
 a part-time course
13. At present, do you have paid work in NZ?
 Yes
 No
 If "yes", what is your occupation or position? _____
 In this job, how many hours do you usually work per week? _____
14. Do you have relatives and/or other family members living in NZ now?
 Yes
 No
 If "yes", which family members are in NZ? (Please tick all boxes that apply)
 Parent
 Husband/Wife
 Child
 Brother/Sister
 Other (please specify) _____
15. Where are you currently living?
 In student hostel
 In rental accommodation (e.g. flat)
 In your own home
 In a homestay (living with a family in NZ)
 In a relative's home
 Other (please specify) _____

16. Finally, this question is about your father, mother and other members in your family.

How many persons are there in your family? _____

Please fill in the following table concerning your family.

Relationship to you (e.g. Father)	Gender	Age	Current country of residence (e.g. China)	Education level (e.g. secondary)	Occupation (e.g. primary school teacher)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

Appendix 9 Personal data sheet (Chinese translation)

“中国留学生在新西兰的经历”研究项目

个人资料表

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谢谢你同意参加这个研究项目。在开始访谈前，我们想问你一些问题，以了解你的个人资料。

对于大多数问题，你只需要勾[] 一个答案。有的问题，你需要选择所有适合你的情况的答案， 或者在空白处填写你的答案。

如果你不想回答某个问题，请在问题旁边写个“R”（代表拒绝回答）。对于任何不适用于你的情况的问题，请在问题旁边写个“NA”（代表不适用）。

请注意，你在此表格和访谈中给予我们的所有资料都是绝对保密的。在此研究的结果里，将不会出现任何可以确认你个人身份的资料。

1. 你的年龄: _____
2. 你的性别: [] 男
[] 女
3. 你在中国哪个城市出生? _____
4. 你的婚姻状况?
[] 未婚
[] 已婚
[] 同居
[] 其他 (请注明) _____
5. 什么是你的宗教信仰?
[] 没有宗教信仰
[] 佛教
[] 基督教
[] 天主教
[] 其他 (请注明) _____

6. 作为一个留学生，你哪一年抵达新西兰学习? _____

那时你多大? _____

那时你住在哪个城市? _____

那时，你在哪一类学校学习?

- 中学
- 理工学院/大学的语言学校
- 私立语言学校
- 理工学院
- 大学
- 其他高等教育机构
- 其他(请注明)_____

那时，你有没有亲戚或家人居住在新西兰?

- 有
- 没有

如果“有”，哪些家人在新西兰? (请选择所有适用的答案)

- 父母
- 丈夫/妻子
- 孩子
- 兄弟姐妹
- 其他(请注明)_____

7. 在你注册为留学生前，你是否来过新西兰?

- 是
- 否

如果“是”，在哪一年? _____

你当时进入新西兰时，持什么签证(如：旅游签证)?

8. 来新西兰前，你最高的学历是什么? _____

请写出你获得此学历的学校名称. _____

除了中国和新西兰外，你还在其他国家学习过吗?

- 是
- 否

如果“是”，在哪个(些)国家? _____

9. 在你来新西兰前，你在任何国家工作过吗（包括中国）？

[] 是
[] 否

如果“是”，在哪个（些）国家？ _____

请写出你来新西兰之前的职业（或职务）及其起始时间。

10. 现在，你在哪个城市居住和学习？ _____

你住在这个城市多长时间了？ _____ 年 _____ 月

你来新西兰多长时间了？ _____ 年 _____ 月

11. 你现在在哪类学校学习？

[] 中学
[] 理工学院/大学的语言学校
[] 私立语言学校
[] 理工学院
[] 大学
[] 其他高等教育机构
[] 其他（请注明） _____

12. 请给予你目前学习的详细情况：

课程类型（如：year 12, Bachelor of Commerce） _____

学校名称（如：AUT） _____

开始的时间 _____

预计完成时间： _____

这是一个： [] 全职课程
[] 非全职课程

13. 现在，你在新西兰有没有一份有薪金的工作？

[] 有
[] 没有

如果“有”，你的职业（或职务）是什么？ _____

对这份工作，你一般每周工作多少个小时？ _____

14. 现在你有亲戚或家人居住在新西兰吗？

- 有
 没有

如果“有”，哪些家里人在新西兰？（请选择所有适用的答案）

- 父母
 丈夫/妻子
 孩子
 兄弟姐妹
 其他（请注明） _____

15. 你现在住在哪里？

- 学生公寓
 租赁住宿（如：小公寓）
 自己的家
 寄宿家庭（在新西兰居住在一个家庭里）
 在亲戚家
 其他（请注明） _____

16. 最后的一个问题是关于你的父亲、母亲和其他家庭成员。

你家里有多少口人？ _____

请填写关于你的家庭情况的表格。

与你的关系 (如：父亲)	性别	年龄	现居住国(如：中国)	教育程度 (如：中学)	职业(如： 小学老师)

谢谢你完成此问卷！

Appendix 10 Focus group questions (Auckland)

FOCUS GROUP MEETING: Auckland

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Self introduction
- Explain current status of the project and purpose of the focus group
- Outline topics that will be discussed
- Explain purpose of tape recording
- Assure anonymity and remind the participants of their right to decline
- Obtain informed consent and have the participants sign the consent forms

2. Support networks in the first few months in New Zealand (45 minutes)

- Ask the participants to introduce themselves, and tell the group what were the things in China that they missed most when they first arrived.
- Summarise their experiences and explore:
 - the support they received from homestay families. How had your homestay family helped you to adjust to New Zealand life initially? Tell us some of your positive and negative experiences.
 - teachers and other staff in the language school (or the educational institution you studied initially). How had they helped you to adjust to New Zealand life initially? Tell us some of your positive and negative experiences.
 - new friends in New Zealand. Was it difficult to make new friends in the first few months? How had your new friends helped you to adjust to New Zealand life initially?
 - What other people (both in New Zealand and in China) helped you to adjust to New Zealand life? How?
 - What types of support networks were most useful in the first few months?

3. Break for 5-10 minutes

4. Wider support networks (20 minutes)

- Your parents. How often do you contact your parents (or other family members in China)? Did you have more contacts with them in the first three months? What sort of support they give that is helpful? What are not helpful? How much do you tell them about your life in New Zealand? What aspects of your life you do not want them to know? What other things they can do that would be helpful/supportive?
- When you studied in the language school, did you have 'Kiwi' friends? What sort of support could they give? What advice can you give to other international students with regard to making friends with people from other nationalities?

5. Attitudes towards studying in Auckland (30 minutes)

- Why did you choose to study in Auckland rather than another city? How do you feel about the reasons for choosing Auckland **now**? What suggestions do you have for international students studying in Auckland?
 - future work prospects
 - costs of living
 - living environment, including safety
 - other main concerns raised in the discussion
- What suggestions do you have for improvement?

6. Closing the interview (5 minutes)

- Thank the participants for taking part in the focus group, and give out food vouchers
- Light refreshment

Appendix 11 Focus group questions (Christchurch)

FOCUS GROUP MEETING: Christchurch

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Self introduction
- Explain current status of the project and purpose of the focus group
- Outline topics that will be discussed
- Explain purpose of tape recording
- Assure anonymity and remind the participants of their right to decline
- Obtain informed consent and have the participants sign the consent forms

2. Intentions to live or work in New Zealand (40 minutes)

- Ask the participants to introduce themselves. Tell us if you had planned to apply for permanent residence, and/or to look for jobs in New Zealand before you arrived, and what are your plans now.
- Summarise their experiences and explore:
 - their reasons for applying for permanent residence in NZ; reasons for not applying and reasons for changing their plans (i.e. from applying to not applying or vice versa)
 - their experiences (if any) of applying for PR
 - their reasons for looking for jobs in NZ; reasons for not looking for jobs
 - their experiences (if any) of looking for jobs in NZ. How easy or difficult is it for you to find a job in your field of study in NZ? In China? Why?
 - In what ways have your intentions of gaining residence and/or employment in NZ impacted on your study experiences in NZ (e.g. change of study course to meet immigration requirements; time lost in studies; English proficiency)
 - In what ways have your intentions of gaining residence and employment in NZ impacted on your overall satisfaction with NZ life? (explore feelings of uncertainty, frustrations etc)? What suggestions do you have for international students intending to apply for PR in NZ?

3. Break for 5-10 minutes

4. How to strengthen support networks in NZ (45 minutes)

- Your process of studying and living in NZ may not always be a happy experience. Other than getting support from your co-national friends, what types of support from educational institutions (including student unions) and the local communities (e.g. churches, Chinese associations, other NGOs) are useful? What things they can do that would be helpful/supportive?
- Changes in your relationship with parents are necessary as you move to study overseas. What are the relationship adjustments you and your parents have had to make? What aspects of relationship adjustments you most like? What difficulties have you and your parents experienced in the transition process? To what extent do you think your parents understand your life in NZ? In what areas would you like your parents to give you more help or support? What have you done to help them understand your need for help or support?

5. Attitudes towards studying in Christchurch (20 minutes)

- Why did you choose to study in Christchurch rather than another city? How do you feel about the reasons for choosing Christchurch **now**? What suggestions do you have for international students studying in Christchurch?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of studying in Christchurch? Ask the participants to rate Christchurch in relation to other cities in New Zealand as a study destination in terms of:
 - its quality of education
 - future work prospects
 - costs of living
 - living environment, including safety
 - other main concerns raised in the discussion
- a. What suggestions do you have for improvement?

6. Closing the interview (5 minutes)

- Thank the participants for taking part in the focus group, and give out food vouchers
- Light refreshment

Appendix 12 Focus group questions (Hamilton)

FOCUS GROUP MEETING: Hamilton

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Self introduction
- Explain current status of the project and purpose of the focus group
- Outline topics that will be discussed
- Explain purpose of tape recording
- Assure anonymity and remind the participants of their right to decline
- Obtain informed consent and have the participants sign the consent forms

2. Educational experiences in NZ's universities/polytechnics (45 minutes)

- Ask the participants to introduce themselves, and tell the group how many years they had learned English before coming to New Zealand, their highest educational attainment in China, and what educational institutions (including language school) they had attended before enrolling **in the university / polytechnic.**
- Summarise their experiences and explore:
 - Is English an issue for your studies in the university / polytechnic? If yes, how? What parts of your studies are hindered by your English?
 - Apart from language, what difficulties have you experienced in studying in New Zealand?
 - [for those participants who had attended language school] How does the method of teaching and learning in the university / polytechnic compare with the method in the language school? What things helped you to transition from the language school to tertiary studies? What are/ were some of the barriers to your learning? What learning support systems would you like to suggest to help Chinese students to learn in New Zealand?
 - [for those participants who attended the 2+2 programme] How does the method of teaching and learning in NZ university / polytechnic compare with the method in the first two years of your studies in China? What things help you to learn in NZ? What are/ were some of the barriers to your learning?
 - When you have completed your studies, how easy or difficult it is for you to find a job in your field of study in New Zealand? In China? Why?

3. Break for 5-10 minutes

4. Attitudes towards choosing New Zealand as a study destination (30 minutes)

- What are the three most important things to consider in choosing a study destination?
- Summarise the findings and ask the participants to rate New Zealand as a study destination in terms of:
 - its quality of education
 - future work prospects (in NZ, China or elsewhere)
 - costs
 - living environment
 - safety
 - other main concerns raised in the discussions
- a. What are New Zealand's competitive advantages as a study destination?
- b. What suggestions do you have for improvement?
- c. Why did you go to Hamilton to study [please note that some participants might have studied in other cities before]? How do you feel about the reasons for choosing Hamilton **now**? What suggestions do you have for attracting more international students to come to Hamilton to study?

5. Closing the interview (5 minutes)

- Thank the participants for taking part in the focus group, and give out food vouchers
- Light refreshment

Appendix 13 Focus group questions (Rotoura)

FOCUS GROUP MEETING: Rotoura

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Self introduction
- Explain current status of the project and purpose of the focus group
- Outline topics that will be discussed
- Explain purpose of tape recording
- Assure anonymity and remind the participants of their right to decline
- Obtain informed consent and have the participants sign the consent forms

2. Learning English in China and in New Zealand (45 minutes)

- Ask the participants to introduce themselves, and tell the group how many years they had learned English before coming to New Zealand, and some difficulties they had experienced in studying English **in the language school** when they first arrived.
- Summarise their experiences and explore:
 - the teachers in the language school. How had language school teachers helped you with your learning? What were not useful? Give examples.
 - other students in the language school. How had other students helped you with your learning? What were not useful? Give examples.
 - the teaching/learning method in the language school. How did the method of learning English in the language school compare with the method in China? What were the strengths and weaknesses of each approach? What things helped you to learn? What were some of the barriers to your learning?
 - the IELTS. Did you find the IELTS difficult? Which parts were difficult? What challenges had the IELTS posed for you (e.g. did you have to spend more time than originally planned in the language school to gain the required scores in the IELTS)? How had the IELTS impacted on your studies in New Zealand?
 - Apart from language, what difficulties have you experienced in studying in New Zealand? What learning support systems would you like to suggest to help Chinese students to learn in New Zealand?

3. Break for 5-10 minutes

4. Attitudes towards choosing New Zealand as a study destination (40 minutes)

- What are the three most important things to consider in choosing a study destination?
- Summarise the findings and ask the participants to rate New Zealand as a study destination in terms of:
 - its quality of education
 - future work prospects (in NZ, China or elsewhere)
 - costs
 - living environment
 - safety
 - other main concerns raised in the discussions
- a. What are New Zealand's competitive advantages as a study destination?
- b. What suggestions do you have for improvement?
- c. Why did you go to Rotorua to study rather than another city? How do you feel about the reasons for choosing Rotorua **now**? What suggestions do you have for attracting more international students to come to Rotorua to study?

5. Closing the interview (5 minutes)

- Thank the participants for taking part in the focus group, and give out food vouchers
- Light refreshment