

Patriotic Education through Private/Everyday Narratives: What We Can Learn from Young People

Authors : Yijie Wang, Hanwei Cheng

Abstract : Under the Chinese educational context, the materials for patriotic education typically take the form of grand narratives. However, in post-modern times the younger members of society tend to welcome elements of more micro and personal nature. It is therefore important to explore how patriotism can be integrated into an 'everyday', private narrative that holds more attraction for the young. Based on semi-structured interviews of eight Chinese graduate students, this research examines how Chinese young people draw materials to establish national identity and develop love for the country from everyday-life details, as well as how they perceive, interpret and articulate their patriotism through private narratives. And implications for patriotic education are proposed accordingly. Several conclusions are drawn from the pre-interviews. Firstly, sensory experiences that remind people of their country—such as the taste of Chinese delicacies and the sound of a traditional instrument—are a major source of patriotic feelings. Secondly, the love for the country often stems from and is continued to be mediated by the emotional attachment with other people, typically significant others, and patriotism is articulated (or acknowledged) by the young as a kind of 'sentiment' rather than 'faith' or 'belief'. Thirdly, for young people who are currently studying abroad, their birth country represents a kind of familiar, well-accustomed life or lifestyle, and any nostalgic realization of it leads to increased national belonging and sense of identity. Fourthly, the awareness of the country's transformations—positive ones and neutral ones alike—triggers young people affections towards the country, and even negative transformations may result in promoted sense of self-involvement and therefore consolidate national identity. Implications for patriotic education can be drawn accordingly, and although the research is conducted under the Chinese context, it will hopefully contribute to the understanding of relevant fields.

Keywords : national identity, patriotic education, private narrative, young people

Conference Title : ICSES 2018 : International Conference on Sociology of Education and Society

Conference Location : Prague, Czechia

Conference Dates : May 24-25, 2018