

Idiom by Lon Yan

人各有志

ren2 ge4 you3 zhi4

A recent survey found children these days have career ambitions that are quite different from past generations, or at least not the same as what most parents would hope for – top choice for girls is to become an artist or singer, and that for boys is game designer.

Other dream jobs for boys included athlete and police officer. Apparently recent court cases of policemen accused of beating up civilians haven't hurt the image of the profession, at least not in the eyes of the youngsters.

Girls also want to be fashion designer and teacher.

Among the traditionally coveted professions, or professions preferred by parents, doctor attracted 6.3 percent of votes, and lawyer only a meagre three percent. Accountant and engineer are much further down the list. Curiously, young people aren't

really interested in becoming bosses or CEOs.

Parents might be disappointed, and mutter “人各有志” (ren2 ge4 you3 zhi4).

“人” (ren2) is “a person,” “people,” “各” (ge4) “each,” “every,” “respectively,” “individually,” “有” (you3) “to have,” “to exist” and “志” (zhi4) “will,” “aspiration,” “ambition. Literally, “人各有志” (ren2 ge4 you3 zhi4) is “each person has his or her own ambition.”

“人各有志” (ren2 ge4 you3 zhi4) is an observation that people have different aspirations and ambitions, and you cannot force others to do as you wish.

The idiom has a negative connotation. It expresses disapproval of the “ambition” in question. When a long-time employee leaves for the competitor, you may hear the boss say “人各有志” (ren2 ge4 you3 zhi4) – people choose what they choose.

Terms containing the character “志” (zhi) include:

志願 (zhi4 yuan4) – an aspiration; a desire

志氣 (zhi4 qi4) – lofty aspiration

志向 (zhi4 xiang4) – ambitions

志趣 (zhi4 qu4) – inclination; interest; disposition