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| Executive Summary |

In an era of globalisation, the world has become more interconnected through interdependence and increased competition. Geopolitics, economic development, climate change, and public health have become issues that require global solutions. As young people are the future of the world, it is crucial for them to have an overall global perspective of the trends in world development.

Nurturing a global perspective in young people has received increasing attention around the world. An international survey conducted in 2017 showed that 57% of the youth polled see themselves as global citizens[[1]](#footnote-2). An overseas study identified the ability to operate globally as being one of the major skills in greatest demand in the future[[2]](#footnote-3). Many governments and international organisations have invested in various schemes to encourage young people to explore different cultures.

As an international city, Hong Kong retains both a close connection with Mainland China and different parts of the world. The National 14th Five Year Plan supports the development of Hong Kong in eight key areas[[3]](#footnote-4). In his speech delivered last year in Hong Kong (2022), President Xi mentioned the need to guide young people to be keenly aware of the trends in both China and the world and help them cultivate a sense of national pride and enhance their awareness of their status as masters of the country[[4]](#footnote-5). A global perspective is necessary for the youth of this city, to help them respond to new trends in the global environment, pursue aspirations and explore new directions for personal growth, as well as enable them to play a more active role as future global citizens.

The HKSAR Government, in its first edition Youth Development Blueprint, mentioned that its vision is to nurture a new generation of young people with an affection for our country and Hong Kong and equipped with global perspective, and aspiring mind-set and positive thinking[[5]](#footnote-6). As society returns to normal, Hong Kong is reconnecting with the world. It is worth examining what the Government and society could do to meet the needs and expectations of the younger generation to expand and enrich their global perspective.

This study looks at what young people understand about having a global perspective and their experiences as they have explored global connections. This study hopes to present some insights about how the Government and Hong Kong society could meet the needs of the younger generation to further cultivate their abilities in this aspect.

In conducting this study, data was collected between February and April 2023 through: an onsite survey of 522 young people (aged 15 to 34); 18 parallel-case interviews with similar individuals; and exclusive interviews with 6 academics and experts.

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| Main Discussion |

1. A global perspective could enable young people to establish a positive attitude, and contribute to the sustainable development of Hong Kong and the world.

With reference to international studies, a global perspective basically consists of three domains: cognition, reflection, and connection. The world is increasingly connected, and issues are closely related to people worldwide. A global perspective helps people to collaborate and solve global issues with a broader vision and more open-minded thinking.

Of the 522 young people polled on the onsite survey, 86% considered having a global perspective to be important. Many of the 18 parallel-case interviews experienced the positive aspects of having a global perspective, mainly: bringing more possibilities of different development, enhancing their sense of national identity, and becoming more content with the merits of local society.

Summing up the views of the 6 experts and scholars, a global perspective emphasises values such as empathy, respect for different cultures, and collaborative problem-solving; all these could help build and maintain a more humanistic society.

Hong Kong has long been an international city. The National 14th Five Year Plan has set out the city’s eight centres positioning. A global perspective is crucial to the future development of Hong Kong’s youth. The city’s demand for talent with cross-cultural ability, affection for the country and Hong Kong, and competence in facing the world increases. Effectively broadening the global perspective of the city’s younger generation deserves the attention of the Government and all sectors of the city.

2. The majority of young people surveyed consider themselves as global citizens. Appreciation of/ respect for different cultures is the value that is most treasured by respondents. The most important ability is to comprehend the current state of the world. Some youth in the parallel-case interviews say that they are no longer bystanders when it comes to the development of the world.

Various societies around the world attach great importance to and provide resources to nurture the cross-cultural ability of their younger generation to enable them to become higher quality global citizens.

A significant percentage of young people surveyed see themselves as global citizens (87.7%). The average level of agreement with the statement ‘The world has no distance from me’ was 6.05 marks (on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being the highest). According to their point of view, the most important value of a global perspective is to appreciate/respect different cultures (34.1%); the most important ability is to understand the current situation of the world (31.4%).

Most respondents have concerns with global issues; the top three being: the global economy (37.4%), environmental pollution (29.1%), and war/conflict (23.2%). Their average level of attention to world affairs and globalisation was 6.19 and 6.14, respectively. More than half obtain world news or information through social media (65.3%) or websites (52.3%) on a daily basis.

Some respondents in the parallel-case interviews believed that a person with a quality global perspective should demonstrate an ability to interact with the world, observe the current situations of the world and foresee the impact to establish a viewpoint or take actions for the betterment of society.

We should cherish the worldview that young people hold, and build more platforms to increase opportunities for them to get in touch with different cultures so that they could find their role and exert influence in an ever-changing world.

3. Important elements that could effectively nurture young people’s global perspective include: curiosity, pay daily attention to international news, have peer companions, and in-depth experiential and reflective learning.

3.1 Curiosity to start exploring the world.

Some of the experts and scholars interviewed pointed out that curiosity is the starting point for exploring the world, as it motivates individuals to actively think and ask relevant questions. A respondent in the parallel-case interview said that his peers came from different parts of the world, with the difference in cultural behaviour prompting his curiosity and further developing his interest. Another respondent noticed the development of the Middle East in recent years, and from the information he received, he learned about that region’s cultural uniqueness; increasing his interest in knowing more about the region.

Nearly 1 in 4 (24.3%) of the respondents consider the lack of curiosity/interest to explore the world as the biggest obstacle to cultivating their global perspective. Although not the largest proportion amongst the options provided in this question, the percentage is noteworthy. A respondent in the parallel-case interview said that young people should set time aside to experience life, as it could help discover the interesting side of the world.

3.2 Paying attention to international news on a daily basis could help enhance a global perspective.

More than 40% (42.0%) of respondents referred to paying attention to international news on a daily basis as the most helpful means to improve their global perspective, closely followed by collecting information online (39.3%). However, some respondents in the parallel-case interviews pointed out that international affairs are rarely discussed in their social circles. A scholar believed that reading international news could help broaden a person’s global perspective. However, he has observed that in recent years most of the international news covered in the local media were quoted from foreign media, in which angles of connection with the local society were easily ignored.

There is overseas research pointing out that discussing international affairs is one of the key ways to build young people’s global competency. In recent years, international news covered in the local media tended to lack a local angle, which may adversely affect readers' interest or understanding of international affairs. How to encourage young people to have multi-angle discussions on international affairs, and the relationship between young people receiving international information through the media and their establishment of a global perspective, is worth further study.

3.3 Accompanied by peers for mutual encouragement, or with networking around the world could help young people go faster, deeper, and further in exploring global connections.

A respondent in the parallel-case interview said that he had hardly any friends who were interested in exploring the world in his immediate social circle. He then met a group of like-minded peers in some exchange programmes. This not only alleviated his sense of loneliness in exploring the world, but also provided a source of encouragement through exchange experiences, reassuring him to continue.

Some respondents in the parallel-case interviews said that they had established connections with peers overseas. Through exchanging local information, they could be more able to access or understand the real situation of the societies where the peers were located. Their sense of empathy for that particular society would also become stronger.

Exploring the world is a continuous journey. It is neither based on imagination nor a one-way process. Having peers as companions could enable young people to go faster, deeper and further.

3.4 Components for in-depth experiential and reflective learning could bring more positive results.

Some respondents in the parallel-case interviews had positive comments when asked about the effectiveness of the exchange programmes or other similar activities in which they had participated. This was mainly due to them being deeply involved in the process, such as collecting information and planning itineraries, in which they reached out to residents to learn more about the real life of ordinary people. This provided a very important way for them to more carefully reflect.

Some respondents in the parallel-case interviews, however, had reservations about such activities. One of the major reasons was the lack of involvement in the preparation beforehand. Another respondent noticed that the quality of the exchange programmes arranged by different groups in the society greatly varied, with some just arranging tourist sports visits as a matter of course.

An expert took the view that exchange experiences could broaden horizons, while the key is to make good use of the experiences for reflection. Whether the experiences are positive or negative, it could enable people to have a deeper understanding of themselves, and fine-tune their beliefs and values.

Nurturing a global perspective is neither a matter of indulging in empty talk, nor hitting the high spots. It requires in-depth experience, such as participation in the preparation work, have a profound level of understanding during the process, reflecting upon and fine-tuning of beliefs. In Hong Kong, different organisations provide a lot of exchange programmes. Yet, a crucial element is whether the programmes allow for participants to go through in-depth experiences and reflection.

4. In the process of exploring global connections, young people have encountered challenges, mainly including a lack of resources to experience life outside of Hong Kong, the need to learn other languages in addition to already possessing bi-literate and trilingual ability, and a lack of recognition from family members.

When respondents were asked if they had developed a sufficient level of having their own global perspective, the average mark was only 5.46 (on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being the highest). The following summarised the challenges that the respondents in the survey and the parallel-case interviews have encountered in the process of cultivating a global perspective.

4.1 A lack of resources to experience life outside of Hong Kong.

The lack of resources to experience life outside of Hong Kong is the biggest obstacle that respondents face preventing them from exploring global connections (43.1%). Other obstacles include the lack of chances to reach out to different cultures (31.2%), and a lack of practice in daily life (25.1%). A respondent in the parallel-case interview said that he had never experienced life outside of Hong Kong before completing his Secondary school course due to limited resources. He even, at that time, thought that he would not have any possibility of leaving the residential area in which he and his family were living.

Each youth is a new driving force for the sustainable development of Hong Kong’s future; society should not ignore the needs for cross-cultural learning and exposure to the world among those youth from a disadvantaged social and economic background.

4.2 Bi-literate and trilingual ability might not be sufficient to meet today’s needs.

Some respondents in the parallel-case interviews said that they were proficiently bi-literate and trilingual, as they were born and raised in Hong Kong. They noted that the population of many places has grown rapidly in recent years. These places have their own native languages, and the languages of some emerging economies are unique. They also noted that other languages such as French and Spanish are increasingly spoken worldwide. They believed that Hong Kong's younger generation needs to learn some other languages in addition to being bi-literate and trilingual.

Language is one of the main tools of communication. Hong Kong society has implemented a bi-literate and trilingual policy for many years, which has its historical origins and social development needs. Nowadays people are living in the oft-named global village. It seems there is a need to learn some other languages. Learning a language requires investments in time and other resources. Also, the earlier the age when learning a language, the easier it is to pick up. The Government and society should pay attention to the needs of the younger generation in this regard, and examine the feasibility for young people to learn other languages in addition to the current bi-literate and trilingual learning system.

4.3 A lack of recognition from family members.

A youth case respondent said that her parents were reluctant for her to do voluntary work in less developed countries due to concerns over safety. She needed to make some effort to alleviate their worries. Another respondent had hoped to study abroad, but his family considered that the subject he was interested in was relatively unpopular in the Hong Kong market. His family members reminded him to think twice before making the final decision.

Generations grow up in different environments, and the future development of the world is beyond our imagination. The expectations of the younger generation for exploring the world might not be the same as those of older generations. In nurturing a global perspective, parents and elders should try to adopt a more open attitude; paying more attention to and understanding the needs of today's youth. This could help the younger generation to explore more.

5. The world is diverse and multi-polarised, and Hong Kong’s youth need to strengthen their national identity to enhance their cross-cultural ability.

An expert pointed out that a global perspective inevitably involves cultural exchanges with people with different backgrounds and from various places. Individuals need to have a basic understanding of their own culture, identity, and the history of the country so that they could be more certain about themselves for effective cross-cultural communication. Yet, the foundation of these aspects in Hong Kong’s young people is relatively weak, which hinders their performance in cross-cultural interaction.

According to the survey, some respondents did not want to participate in any exchange activities outside of Hong Kong even if there was such a change (11.5%). When asked about where they most wanted to go if there were job opportunities for development outside of the city, a significant proportion chose the option of staying in Hong Kong (20.9%).

The unique historical background of the city, to a certain extent, has affected the foundation of young people's sense of culture and identity. In recent years, the city has devoted many resources to strengthen national education, and it is believed that the situation would be gradually improved. As mentioned, some youth cases have improved their sense of identity after experiencing life outside Hong Kong. As such strengthening relevant education and assisting young people to experience different places could have a complementary effect.

The ability to operate globally has been identified as being one of the greatest skills in demand for the future. In recent years with many emerging economies having developed, the trend is for increasing mobility of talent. Young people should be open to new development around the world so that they could better grasp the new opportunities.

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| Recommendations |

Based upon the findings and discussion above, and taking young people’s needs to broaden their horizons into consideration, this Study proposes the following recommendations to create a more favourable environment for reaching out to different cultures so that the younger generation could play a more active role as global citizens.

1. Make full use of the favourable conditions and resources in Hong Kong to develop opportunities for young people to experience different cultures locally and understand more about the world.

In response to the need for young people to be exposed to different cultures and to understand the world, this Study recommends that the Government and all sectors of society make full use of the favourable conditions and resources in Hong Kong to provide more such opportunities for young people. This is especially so for those who have not been able to experience life outside of Hong Kong.

1.1 Ethnic minority groups as a precious resource.

Hong Kong is a small place. Yet, there are various ethnic minority groups residing in this city with their own cultures. They are valuable resources in promoting the multiculturalism of the city.

This Study recommends the Government, social service groups, social enterprises and schools act as bridges to promote the cultural activities of different ethnic minority groups to the public, inviting local youth to visit these groups to improve mutual exchanges. This could make it easier for local youth to interact with people from different cultures in their daily lives and enable ethnic minority groups to promote the cross-cultural characteristic of the city. This will also help to promote the social integration of the city.

1.2 Organising worldwide famous festivals at the local community level.

There are many well-known special festivals or traditional celebrations around the world, each with their own distinct historical background and culture. This Study recommends that the Government should cooperate with different community-level organisations to regularly organise these famous festivals in each of the 18 districts. Through these activities, local youth not only could partake in the events, but also take a role in planning them to inspire their curiosity about different cultures. Longer term this would help to promote the multiculturalism of the city.

2. Set up a platform for young people to provide proposals on global issues, to enable young people to think globally, and to practise ideas locally.

Young people have a sense of global citizenship, and they care about global issues. They are willing to be more active and take actions to benefit the world.

This Study recommends that the Government should establish a platform in which young people can propose innovative and feasible improvement plans on global issues, with the opportunity to have funded exchange visits to relevant international organisations outside of Hong Kong. This recommendation aims to provide the means for aspiring youth to be better equipped at turning global issues into local practices, and to enhance their ability to participate in the sustainable development of the world.

3. Offer scholarships to young people in Hong Kong who are interested and whose academic performance meet the requirements to pursue studies in emerging economies, including countries/regions along the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’, to enrich their overseas experiences.

Global operating skills are going to be one of the major skills in greatest demand in the future. This Study highlights that a large percentage of young people are concerned about the global economy, and some youth cases are interested in learning more about emerging economies.

Since the 2016/17 academic year, the Government has established the Belt and Road Scholarship to encourage students from Belt and Road (B&R) countries/regions to pursue studies in full-time publicly-funded university programmes in Hong Kong. At that time, it was thought that scholarships should be provided for Hong Kong students to study in economies along the B&R. There were however opposing views, citing that some regions along the B&R had not yet established economic and trade relations with Mainland China, and that the relevant regions were not popular places for higher education.

In recent years, a number of emerging economies are now located along the B&R, and have also established closer economic and trade relations with Mainland China. The work of broadening the horizons of young people needs to move with the times and correspond with the investment of resources. This Study recommends that the Government should proactively reconsider offering scholarships to young people in Hong Kong who are interested - and whose academic performance meet the requirements to pursue studies–in emerging economies, including countries/regions along the B&R. This could help Hong Kong's higher education become more international and diverse, while cultivating talent with a global perspective and worldwide networks.

4. Promote youth-oriented exchange programmes.

The Government and Hong Kong society as a whole should promote youth-oriented exchange programmes. Young people could have more leadership of and involvement in different stages of the programmes: including collection of information, design of the itinerary and activity arrangements, and to reflect on their experiences. This could improve the quality of global perspective among young people.

Youth-oriented exchange programmes should also include the element of mentoring, in which young people could share their experiences through multimedia channels to positively enhance the significance of young people influencing their peers.

1. The Western Union Company. (2017). Globalization: A World View of the Future. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Oxford Economics. (2021). Global Talent 2021. The report (Global Talent 2021) refers global operating skill to cultural sensitivity, foreign language skills, ability to work in multiple overseas locations, understanding international business, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The People’s Republic of China. (2021). 14th Five-Year Plan. March 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office Of The State Council. (2022). Website. The speech delivered by President Xi Jinping at the meeting celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland and the inaugural ceremony of the sixth-term government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. 2022-07-01. For the English version, visit The State Council’s Website at http://english.www.gov.cn/news/topnews/202207/02/content\_WS62bf8de6c6d02e533532d147.html [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The Government of the HKSAR. (2022). Youth Development Blueprint. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)