

**Becoming a Global Citizen Through Study Abroad:  
A Longitudinal Study of Chinese Postgraduate Students'  
Experience in the UK**

**Xi Tao**

Institute of Education, University College London  
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## **DECLARATION**

I, Xi Tao, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## Abstract

Given the dramatically increasing number of Chinese students who study abroad following the evolution of globalisation, a new era of China's development calls for international higher education with the aim of cultivating global citizens who are able to learn, participate and contribute to an interconnected world of diversity, complexity and uncertainty. However, there is little evidence for understanding the relationship between Chinese students' global citizenship and their experiences studying abroad. This research explores how Chinese international students perceive themselves as global citizens and examines the specific skills they have developed while studying in the UK. Global Citizen (GC) is interpreted through three lenses as neoliberal (working in a global economy), cosmopolitan (engaging people from different cultures) and critical pedagogy (making sense of the globalised world). The research applies a qualitative approach within a longitudinal study consisting of questionnaires and in-depth interviews undertaken at the beginning, middle and end of nineteen students' postgraduate programmes from September 2019 to July 2020.

Based on Transformative Learning Theory, the findings demonstrate that overseas study can enhance students' global outlook, improving their understanding of global issues, cosmopolitan value, intercultural competence, critical thinking, life skills, academic skills, social participation and digital literacy. The participants' change of perspectives and development of global skills were triggered by six types of experiences, including being out of their comfort zone, encountering otherness, pedagogical adjustment, social participation, accessing global media and COVID-19. The study challenges previous stereotypes towards Chinese students and highlights the learners' agencies on self-reflection, frequent intercultural engagement, and proactive social participation as the fundamental driving forces towards becoming global citizens. The recommendations from this research could inform policymakers and educators to offer better global education practice and support for international students.

## Impact Statement

This study explores the relationship between Chinese students' global citizenship and their experiences studying abroad in the UK. The impact of this research is best realised in the value of understanding and facilitating international students' perceptions of global citizenship and the development of skills relevant to living in a globalised society. The knowledge and insights generated from my study not only contribute to academia but also has the potential to improve a harmonious society, with impacts to cultural diversity, international development, educational policy and the UK's wider economy. Additionally, the 19 students who took part in this longitudinal study directly benefited from the opportunity for self-reflection on their transformative learning journey and the chance to express their own voice on issues relating to social justice, especially amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

Within academia, this study makes significant advances in understanding the global citizenship development of Chinese international students throughout their lived experience in the UK. Although there have been many studies on Chinese students' overseas learning and global citizenship of university students, this research is one of the very few that links the two areas together. Meanwhile, the analysis applies Transformative Learning Theory and three lenses of global citizenship to interpret the participants' perceptions of their study abroad journey. Therefore, I provide a unique approach to reflecting on international higher education beyond the traditional view of internationalisation as a vehicle for marketisation and commodification. With the purpose of knowledge contribution, I have presented this research at nine international conferences, including the Academic Network on Global Education and Learning, China and Higher Education, the Chinese Education Research Association, the Beijing International Conference in Education and many more. I will also deliver a webinar on Chinese students as global citizens at the Centre for Global Higher Education. Moreover, this research will contribute to a chapter for a book named *Research in Global Learning*, to be published in 2022.

Apart from the scholarly impact, the findings from this research can enhance the quality of the higher education system, foster intercultural communication, encourage study abroad activities, benefit international students and contribute to the UK's

economic growth. The findings provide rich evidence for the social, cultural, pedagogical and commercial value of international higher education and global citizenship and highlight some drawbacks of the current system and areas for improvement. The recommendations derived from the conclusion will inform policymakers, educators and study abroad agents to provide better services and support for international students. I presented this research's implications at the national Vitae Three Minute Thesis competition and won first place at IOE. My public engagement raised the audience's awareness of global learning and attracted the interest of scholars and policymakers for further collaboration. Moreover, as the revenue from Chinese students constitute at least £1.7 billion for the UK's education sector and is continuously increasing (Times HE, 2020), this research suggests an effective approach to attract more Chinese students, thereby benefiting the UK's overall economy. Furthermore, I plan to develop a programme for cultivating Chinese students' global skills based on the framework derived from this research.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

With a dramatic rise in the number of Chinese international students in higher education worldwide (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015, Altbach, 2019; Esaki-Smith, 2020) and growing demand on cultivating global citizenship (GC) for university students (Shultz, 2012; Chang, 2016; Bourn, 2021a), it is important to understand how studying abroad impacts Chinese students' GC. The UK has been a popular destination for Chinese students, who made up 35% of all international students in its universities in 2020 (HESA, 2021). Chinese students are not only an important income source for British higher education, but also bring enormous cultural diversity to campuses and UK society as a whole (McGowan, 2017). However, despite the fact that Chinese students constitute the largest and growing mobile population in the UK (BBC, 2020), there is little understanding about how their overseas study and lived experiences affect their GC in terms of their values and skills to live in a globalised world. This qualitative research investigates the relationship between Chinese postgraduate students' GC and their study abroad experiences in three prestigious universities in the UK.

In my research, GC development is a form of transformative learning in which Chinese students interact with the globalised world while reflecting on their own belief systems, thoughts, feelings and actions. Within this learning journey, their perception of themselves, others and the world are constantly changing and expanding. As becoming a global citizen involves students' changing perceptions of their place in the world and acquiring skills for global engagement (Killick, 2011; Bourn, 2018), the research explores GC through both a value-based and skill-based approach. Drawing on evidence from the literature review and my own research interest, this study identifies the development of GC as a multifaceted concept and a multidimensional process formed by two parts: students' changing perception of GC and their improvement in global skills during their study abroad. In other words, I perceive GC as an umbrella term, which consists of students' values and skills to live in a globalised world of diversity, complexity and uncertainty. Therefore, this study enhances the understanding of how Chinese international students develop GC in the UK.

My research aims to present various perspectives of GC and experiences of becoming global citizens from the unique approaches of Chinese students, which are distinct from the prevailing Western sense of GC and previous literature on GC and study abroad. All 19 students who participated in three sets of interviews from October 2019 to July 2020 demonstrated the changing process of their interpretation on GC, developing global citizen attributes, understanding of globalisation and improvement in global skills. It is not surprising that the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic in the middle of students' postgraduate study programmes had a profound impact on most Chinese students' overseas journey and inevitability influenced their perceptions on GC. Although confronting some emotional frustration and the inconvenience of travel restrictions, the pandemic deepened students' understandings of globalisation and accelerated the changing process of how they sense themselves in an interconnected world. My findings reflect both positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 on students' international mobility experiences and their reflection on GC during this very special period.

This chapter begins with an overview of the background to this project, including the context, issues and rationales, that frame my research. Following this is the purpose statement and accompanying research questions. After that, I explain the research design to provide a summary of the scope and methodology for the study. Also included in this chapter is a discussion on the limitations of previous literature and the significance of my research. This chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the whole thesis.

## **1.1 Research Background**

### **1.1.1 Issue Statement**

Rapidly developing into an influential power in the world, China is the world's second largest economy and is experiencing enormous change in its economic structure, international collaboration, global connections and technology advancement (Wang, 2019; Tran et al, 2021). This transformational change is accelerating China's growth into a knowledge and skills-based economy with the need for more well-educated human resources with global mindsets (Cai, 2008; China Daily, 2019). More and more Chinese university students have started to rethink their identity and global citizenship

has emerged as a positive term to describe their situation (Feng, 2011; Chen, 2011). In the past two decades, there has been a steady increase in the number of Chinese students studying abroad or enrolling in transnational higher education programmes (Law, 2015; Mok et al, 2021). With a strong belief that international and transnational higher education can improve their all-rounded skills (Yang, 2018), add value to their academic qualifications (Zheng, 2014), enhance their employability (Huang & Turner, 2018) and develop their global outlook (Yuan & Yu, 2019), more and more Chinese students are eager to engage in an international education. Moreover, due to the dramatic growth of China's middle-class and their common recognition of the significance of an international education qualification (Hu, 2018), many Chinese families support their children to study abroad with private funding and believe their children will acquire different sets of global skills from international study experience.

Globalisation has profoundly shaped contemporary Chinese society and a new generation of university students in China (Wang, 2019). The most significant impact of globalisation on China is the adoption of competition as a central economic practice, the opening up of its market to international trade and the implantation of the English language as the second language in China's education system (Overholt, 2005). There is a clear link between China's globally driven economic boom and the increasing need for university graduates to have a global mindset and relevant skills (Yan et al, 2019). It is commonly recognised that China's production economy is being rapidly overtaken by the upcoming knowledge economy and China is enhancing its competitive edge through the adoption and development of multinational knowledge-based industries and institutions (China Daily, 2017). Although some anti-globalists see the trend of globalisation and an increasing number of Chinese students who learn English and study abroad as an assault on Chinese national culture and autonomy (Haynes, 2008), it is widely accepted that the acceleration of globalisation in China has created demand for cultivating GC with the goal of better equipping students to comprehend this continuing process and function in a globalised society (Cai, 2014). As Neubauer and Zhang (2015) point out, for China to remain a major global power politically, economically, and socially, developing GC is becoming increasingly crucial. Indeed, the development of China's knowledge economy through cultivating more and more global citizens with international study experience has become a trend in China's society.

While an increasing number of Chinese students continue to spread in Western countries, there appears to be a predominantly economic rationale behind the internationalisation of higher education (Altbach, 2019; Esaki-Smith, 2020). Indeed, the phenomenon of Chinese international students in Western universities has shaped a dominant neoliberal and competitive paradigm that views education as an international commodity (de Wit, 2019). In this model, study abroad is commonly considered in terms of human capital formation and framed as students' investment in their future prosperity as employees (Tarrant, 2010; Hammond & Keating, 2017). As such, international mobility, with the aim of producing graduates who are able to work effectively in a global market, emphasise private good and capitalism instead of public good (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Marginson, 2014). However, many scholars (e.g. Scholte, 2005; Green, 2012; Bourn, 2018) argue that the commercial and instrumental focus of internationalisation in educating global citizens should not replace the value of equity of rights, sustainability and global justice. Therefore, my research questions whether these values can be manifested in Chinese international students' learning journey.

The impact of globalisation on Chinese students' international mobility and global citizenship development offers great opportunities for researchers, educators and universities. Studying abroad, deemed as the most effective approach for Chinese students to develop GC, is a prominent feature in numerous promotional rhetoric around international education (Streitwieser, Light, & Wang, 2009; Chen, 2011; Yuan et al, 2019). This idea assumes that participating in study abroad offers a life-changing experience and broadens students' horizons to a global level. Regardless of why, what and how students learn abroad, the idea holds that students will acquire the recognised professional and intellectual competency of GC. Indeed, GC is touted as being nothing less than a guaranteed outcome of international mobility (Blum & Bourn, 2019). The problem with this assumption is that many educational institutions across the world use the term GC as if it were commonly understood without any ambiguity of interpretation (Bourn, 2021a). There is hardly any explanation for how the process of studying abroad could develop specific competencies associated with a GC clearly defined (Hammond & Keating, 2017). Education providers seldom provide participant data that demonstrates a direct link between a desire for GC and its actual acquisition (Jooste & Heleta, 2017). Within the international education field more widely, there is

no meaningful consensus yet about how to define or measure students' development of GC. Thus, this study aims to address these gaps and redefine the process of GC development in terms of gaining a global perspective and global skills through studying abroad.

### **1.1.2 Rationale for the Research**

In the previous section, I presented the context of Chinese students in international higher education with increasing demand of GC and discussed problems and challenges in the field of GC education under the impact of globalisation. Indeed, Chinese students' international mobility is one of the key aspects of internationalisation and their GC is gaining increasing attention, which demands further exploration. Under this stated issue, my research is based on the following rationales: 1) my personal experiences and passion in cultivating GC through study abroad; 2) my professional experiences and career plan in enhancing Chinese students' GC development; 3) my vision on promoting a value and skill-based GC in global higher education.

My interest in GC and international education derives from the curiosity since my childhood in China, my personal journey of various international experiences and a sense of mission to make the world a better place for humanity. Having grown up in China, witnessing the economic processes of Opening Up and sensing how western culture gradually became part of Chinese people's lifestyle, I was very curious about the trend of internationalisation and globalisation. When I was in high school, I read the book *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman (2005). It fascinated me about the ideas of interconnectedness between nations, along with the advantages and risks of neoliberalism. With the passion of understanding globalisation and the question of how to maximise its positive impact, I studied a BA in International Trade and English Studies in China, which I considered to be the subject most relevant to globalisation offered in my previous university. During my undergraduate study in China, I found there were increasing partnerships between my university and some western universities that provided study abroad opportunities. With a dream of becoming a global citizen who can study, work and live anywhere in the world, I decided to join one of the partnership programmes and came to London to study a BA in International Business.

After three years of studying in the UK, I achieved my initial goal and got a job in an international investment company in London. However, after working in the finance industry for a few years and becoming a British citizen living in London, I felt something was missing in my life and my purpose was not fulfilled. Although I considered myself to be a global citizen who transcended the Chinese national identity and had settled in a foreign country with a decent job, I wasn't doing anything to positively impact the world. I realised deep down in my heart that I wanted to make a contribution to help people become global citizens who not only care about employment but also strive for cosmopolitan values and global social justice. With this sense of mission, I changed my career into the field of international higher education and studied a MA in Educational Planning and International Development. During my MA study, I found my passion in understanding the issues related to Chinese students' overseas experiences, exploring different perspectives on global citizenship and development education, and questioning the current trend of globalisation and social movements. Therefore, I chose to further study these topics in my PhD and hope to develop a theoretical framework to enhance international students' transformative learning experiences towards becoming global citizens.

Through my personal experiences, as a former Chinese student who came to study in the UK, I have experienced a shift in my identity, values and competency from being a Chinese international student to becoming a global citizen. I'm very passionate about understanding, interpreting and potentially improving the experiences of other students who share something in common with me. With a special interest in GC and working in the field of international higher education, my professional goal is to advocate global citizenship and cultivate global skills for Chinese students. During my several years of working as an educational consultant, teacher and project manager, I perceived strong interests and eagerness to gain a global outlook and skills among Chinese university students. More and more Chinese students engage in learning English, watching international news, consuming foreign products and studying abroad. Even though most Chinese university students don't have a clear definition of GC, they are passionate to become global citizens as they believe it will increase their employability and allow them to make the most of globalisation. I believe it is critical to understand and improve GC for Chinese students.

## **1.2. Research Purpose and Questions**

My interest in students' international experiences and their journeys of GC development stems from self-reflection on my personal transformations over the years of living and studying in the UK. In researching the social and learning experiences of Chinese international students, I see myself as both an insider who shares a similar cultural background and an outsider who has already settled in the UK with a family for 12 years. Through self-observation, I found my worldview, values, personality, sense of self, habits, thinking style and perspectives had profoundly changed throughout the first year of my study in the UK. I was confident enough to identify myself as a global citizen after a few months of the initial discomfort, confusion and struggle to adjust to the British education system and lifestyle. Indeed, within a short period of my international mobility experience, I had explored, discovered and learnt new knowledge and many skills that shaped my understanding of who I am and how to interact with the globalised world. However, I noticed that the existing literature rarely focuses or discusses the possibility of Chinese students' transformation into global citizens through study abroad. Thus, I wonder if this type of transformative experience towards GC is a common phenomenon among other Chinese students in the UK.

The purpose of my research is to understand the relationship between GC development and international mobility. To be more specific, this research focuses on Chinese postgraduate students' lived experiences in the UK. This study aims to present a comprehensive picture of Chinese international students' lives through the exploration and interpretation of their transformations related to GC during their master's programmes within 10 months. Specifically, I investigate the students' motivations, experiences, processes of change, personal growth and self-reflections during their overseas study, in relation to gaining global citizen attributes (such as a global outlook, knowledge and values, attitudes, perspectives, intercultural skills, thinking styles and sense of self in the world).

To carry out the purpose, my main research question is how do the study abroad experiences influence Chinese students' perceptions of being global citizens? To shed



light on the main question, four sub-questions are developed to link together the research problem, purpose, design and findings:

Q1: To what extent do Chinese students consider becoming global citizens as a motivation to study abroad? (motivation)

Q2: What experiences trigger and facilitate students' learning towards becoming global citizens? To what extent are these experiences transformative? (experience)

Q3: What are the changes in students' perceptions of GC through study abroad? (change of value)

Q4: What are the perceived global skills students develop through study abroad? (development of skills)

The four questions serve as main themes to present the motivations, experiences, changes of values and improvement of skills through international education. These subsequent questions shape my data collection, analyses and implications. The first question aims to understand broadly why students decide to study abroad, choose the UK as their destination and to select the specific course to study. It also examines the general awareness and attitudes of Chinese students towards GC and global skills to provide a background for exploration of the subsequent questions. The second question explores in detail how and which types of students' lived experiences contribute to their GC development. The third question sheds light on the longitudinal changing processes of the students' values and attitudes towards GC, their understanding of globalisation and sense of self in the globalised world. The fourth question explores in-depth what skills associated with GC students have developed during their study in the UK based on their own perceptions. While the four sub-questions seek students' own descriptions to uncover their lived experiences in the UK, the main research question links the relevance of my study to the field of global learning, international mobility and Chinese students.

### **1.3. Research Design**

This section briefly describes how my study was conducted, through identifying the scope of this qualitative study, the research's longitudinal design and the research process. In this section, I also describe how I choose the sites and participants, which data collection methods used, what type of data were generated, and in which way strategy and theory was applied for data analysis and interpretation. More explicit information about my research design is provided in Chapter 4.

#### **1.3.1. Research scope**

This study intends to focus on understanding the relationship between developing GC and study abroad within a particular scope regarding sites of study, relevant participants and time frame. It involves Chinese postgraduate students who have studied various subjects at three British universities: University College London, a metropolitan university located in the centre of London; University of Bath, a traditional campus university located in a historical British city; and the University of Reading, a well-known university in a market town 40 miles west of London. Considering the differences in location, students' services, cultural diversity, teaching quality and infrastructure of the three universities and courses, students' learning and lived experiences can differ in various aspects. This in turn could affect their GC development in different ways. Instead of focusing on only one university or one particular programme, selecting multiple sites and various types of participants can provide a more holistic picture of Chinese students in the UK.

Regarding the scope of the sample population, three factors influenced the selection of Chinese postgraduate students for this research. First and foremost, I am from mainland China and I am familiar with the culture and values of those students. It is likely that I can build up meaningful connections and reach in-depth understandings through communicating with them using the same language. Secondly, Chinese students from mainland China make up the largest and rapidly growing proportion of the UK's international student population and most of them are postgraduate students (HESA, 2021). So that participants selected from the restricted group of Chinese postgraduate taught students from mainland China are highly representative of a wider group of Chinese students. Thirdly, because postgraduate programmes take less than

one full-time year in the UK, it can offer an intensive transformative journey for students, which made it possible for me to explore their changing perceptions and developing skills by comparing before, during and after studying abroad within ten months.

### **1.3.2. Theoretical Framework**

To provide an insightful understanding of the ways in which GC is manifested in students' lived experiences, I interpret students' perceptions through three lenses (neoliberal, cosmopolitan, and critical pedagogical) which is discussed extensively in the literature review of Chapter 3. After mapping out students' perspectives on GC, I applied a skill-based approach to explore students' GC development and identified a number of pre-existing themes based on Bourn's (2018) "A New Framework for Global Skills" as outlined in *Understanding Global Skills for 21<sup>st</sup> Professions*. The seven-dimensional framework includes key elements of GC as: global identity and awareness, global values and outlook, global knowledge and understandings, global digital literacy and information evaluation, critical thinking and reflection, intercultural collaboration and networking, global responsibility and engagement. Although some main themes of GC and research questions were pre-determined, I flexibly constructed a new conceptual framework named Transformative Learning Abroad for GC after carefully analysing the results from the interviews and questionnaires. This framework is explained in detail in Chapter 5 of findings and Chapter 6 of discussion.

To present students' transformative journey of GC development, my discussion of the findings is grounded in the constructivist Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1994). Based on this theory, I see the trajectory of Chinese students in the UK as a holistic and intercultural encounter that begins with being out of the comfort zone, followed by a confrontation with an international community that may dramatically challenge their assumed worldviews. It exposes learners to situations where they must adapt and transform in order to make the most of their new circumstances. To put it another way, living abroad provides a rich natural learning environment that stimulates far more components of learners' personalities than are often expressed in educational institutions. It may be broadly defined as an encounter between a person and a new

environment, through which the person is shaped holistically. Therefore, my role as a qualitative researcher is to gain a holistic, systemic and integrated insight into the phenomenon within international higher education and to present a richly detailed story that connects Chinese international students' experiences to GC and transformative learning.

### **1.3.3 Methodology**

To gain a comprehensive insight into Chinese students' transformative journey towards GC development, the research project was designed as a 10-month longitudinal study of Chinese international students who were enrolled in their postgraduate course from September 2019 to July 2020. The longitudinal study applies a qualitative method composed of 1) an initial questionnaire; 2) three sets of semi-structured interviews at the beginning, middle and the end of the one-year programme; 3) a questionnaire of the interviewees at the end of their programme. The research began with a mid-scale questionnaire of 120 postgraduate students of different subject areas, including Education, Human Science, Engineering and Business Management, from University College London, the University of Reading and the University of Bath in October 2019. The aim of conducting the questionnaire was to initially identify students' general opinions on GC and purposefully select 19 students from a mixed background for further interviews. Three sets of interviews were undertaken with each student at the beginning (November 2019), middle (March 2020) and final stage (June 2020) of their programme, thereby fulfilling the longitudinal basis of this study. To justify the results from the interviews, a questionnaire was given to all 19 interviewees at the end of their master's programme in July 2020.

The approach to analysis was characterised by thematic coding with a focus on understanding the themes and elements in the field of GC from the narrative accounts gathered from the interview data.

### **1.4. Significance of the Research**

### **1.4.1 Limitations of Previous Research**

On one hand, the phenomenon of Chinese students studying abroad in Western countries has been researched extensively in the field of international education for the past two decades (Schweisfurth & Gu, 2009; Fong, 2011; Yang, 2018; Yuan, Li, & Yu, 2019). In the context of increasing Chinese students in the UK, the existing body of literature's emphasis is on three main areas of study: motivations and variables that affect students' decisions to study in the UK (Bodycott, 2009; Li & Bray, 2007; Cebolla-Boado et al, 2018), students' pedagogical and social experiences in British universities (Turner, 2006; Wu, 2015; McGowan, 2017; Wang, 2018; Mok et al, 2021), and subsequent outcomes (such as identity, employment, intercultural competency) of overseas education after students' return to China (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Huang & Turner, 2018; Tran, Blackmore & Rahimi, 2021). A majority of these studies is based either on quantitative surveys on a large number of students reporting broad trends (e.g. Wu, 2014) or on small-scale qualitative studies of one group of Chinese students from the same universities and course (e.g. Chen, 2012; McGowan, 2017), while focusing narrowly on one or two aspects of international mobility such as intercultural communication, English language skills, difference of learning styles, use of social media and employability.

On the other hand, in recent years there has been an evolution of increasing research leading to the exploration of GC and how it could be implemented in practice in international higher education (Lilley, 2016; Bourn, 2018). However, the role of international mobility in promoting global citizenship is perceived to be unclear due to terminological confusion and the limitations of research (Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011). Many researchers have attempted to investigate how universities and educators view GC by analysing mission statements and programmes' curricula (Clifford & Montgomery, 2011; Bosio, 2019). There is also some interest in investigating how studying abroad affects the conditions for global identity construction (Streitwieser, Light, & Wang, 2009; Killick, 2011). Many research projects have been aimed at investigating institutions and teachers' ideas concerning the concept of global citizenship (Klein & Wikan, 2019), instead of students' own thinking and experiences. At the same time, most of these studies investigate the intercultural experiences of students in exchange programmes or service learning rather than in their degree study

in the host countries (Larsen, 2014). The research on students' changes in perception of GC and development of global skills within their study abroad experiences remains limited to date (Blum & Bourn, 2019). It is vital to gain an understanding of how the concept of global citizenship is perceived among international students and how their studying abroad experiences impact on their skills and global citizenship development.

#### **1.4.2 Significance of my study**

How Chinese students learn and act to become global citizens in the context of international higher education is an under-researched phenomenon. Although cultivating global citizens is frequently expressed as an aim of international education in China, there is limited empirical evidence to understand what a global citizen means from concept to practice for Chinese university students. The complex conditions and different factors that affect Chinese students' GC are not understood, especially considering China's culture and traditions across multiple levels of influence. My research is designed to unravel the rhetoric of educating global citizens by exploring the conceptual underpinnings of GC, students' formal learning and informal activities in the UK and the perceived outcomes related to becoming global citizens. I see the process of becoming global citizens as both context-bound by the external social environment and self-directed by students themselves. I hope to investigate the multi-layered construct of GC including the cultural, political, social, and economic context and the condition of individual students' learning, reflection and participation, thereby providing a comprehensive interpretation of Chinese students' learning journeys in the UK.

Based on the limitations of the existing literature, my research is likely to make original contributions to knowledge in the field of international higher education and global citizenship in three ways: Firstly, applying the multi-dimensional conception of GC to explore learners' changes of perception and personal growth can provide a holistic picture of Chinese international students' values and skills development, instead of only focusing narrowly on a few specific areas of students' learning outcomes. So that my research captures an all-rounded profile of students' professional and personal development journey; Secondly, the design of the conceptual framework named "Transformative Learning for GC Development through Study Abroad" effectively integrates the Transformative Learning Theory into my longitudinal, thematic study,

thereby offering a systematic flow to capture the conditions, processes, changes and outcomes of students' GC development through studying and living in the UK. In doing so, this study can significantly advance education abroad research; Thirdly, the various samples of Chinese students of different majors and universities selected to participate, along with the in-depth qualitative method, sheds light on Chinese international students' perceptions of the education system and social context in the UK. Therefore, my research can provide valuable advice to forthcoming Chinese international sojourners and offer insightful recommendations to universities in the UK.

### **1.5. Overview of the Thesis**

This thesis is structured into seven chapters. Chapter 1 presents the context of my study with a brief overview of the current issue of increasing numbers of Chinese students in global higher education, followed by providing a rationale for the study regarding my personal journey and the limitations of existing literature, thereby leading to the research purpose and questions. It also introduces my research design and defines the key terminology to clarify the study's scope and focus. Chapter 2, as the first part of literature review, provides an in-depth overview of the phenomenon under study, which is the reality of Chinese students' presence with the background of globalisation and internationalisation. Chapter 3 is the second part of the literature review and aims to construct a theoretical framework named Study Abroad as Transformative Learning for GC through critically reviewing existing studies in the field of GC and international mobility. This chapter also explains how Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory can be applied to answer my research questions.

Chapter 4 explains in detail the methodology of my study, beginning with a discussion of the epistemological foundation which leads to the research design of a longitudinal study. It then presents the data collection methods and procedures, as well as an outline of the data analysis and interpretation. The chapter also reflects on my position as the researcher and discusses the limitations of my research. Chapter 5 presents the findings by analysing data from interviews and questionnaires. Chapter 6 integrates my interpretation of the findings with previous literature to discuss the results of my research. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the whole thesis through answering all the research questions and providing implications to the international

higher education system, British universities and Chinese sojourners. It also addresses how this research contributes to the body of knowledge theoretically and practically and proposes recommendations for future research. The appendix includes all documentation necessary to conduct this study and the raw information generated through the research process.

In summary, this study attempts to deepen the understanding of the qualitatively different ways of perceiving GC and developing global skills amongst Chinese postgraduate students in UK universities. This first chapter of my thesis defined what is to be studied and why it is worth studying through stating the problem, purpose research questions, methodology, significance and limitations. The next chapter serves as the first part of the literature review, which explores the background of the research through presenting Chinese students' international mobility in the landscape of globalisation and internationalisation.



## Chapter 2. Literature Review: Chinese International Students in the Age of Globalisation

### Introduction

This study explores the relationship between Chinese students' global citizenship and study abroad experience in international higher education. In the current era of globalisation, there is increasing research and discourse on the processes and connections between developing global citizenship (GC) and studying abroad in the field of international higher education (Tarrant, 2010; Cameron, 2014) and global education (Blum & Bourn, 2019). Dower (2003) states that one of the impacts of globalisation is the rise of interest in GC within higher education systems worldwide. Bourn (2008) agrees that globalisation leads to more economic, cultural and social integration, which increases demand on universities to educate more global citizens with the knowledge and skills to thrive in a globalised world. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there have been increasing calls to develop university students' capacity and skills to think and act globally (Lewin, 2009). More and more university students are beginning to rethink their identities as global citizens who value GC in different ways and acquire skills to live in the global community (Rizvi, 2007). Although the motivation and outcomes of universities and students who participate in international education are highly contested (Clifford & Montgomery, 2011), study abroad programmes are widely regarded as pathways to developing GC (Blum & Bourn, 2019).

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 aim to identify and analyse existing literature related to my main research question, as how studying abroad experiences influence Chinese students' perceptions of being global citizens. Chapter 2 sets up the broad context of this research study by explaining the reality of globalisation and its impact on higher education systems worldwide and presents the global phenomenon under research, including China's changing role in globalisation, the increasing number of Chinese international students in the UK and the reasons behind this trend. Chapter 3 establishes the conceptual model of what a global citizen is through an in-depth discussion on the different approaches to perceive GC and potential elements of global skills. The Global Citizen Model formed in this conceptual framework serves as guidance for the research design to evaluate Chinese international students' studying

abroad processes and outcomes. Chapter 3 also brings in transformative learning theory as the theoretical framework to demonstrate the potential effect of studying abroad on GC development. The final part of the literature review presents the possibilities and limitations of GC development within international mobility through critical analysis and comparison of previous research and debates in global higher education. Drawing on evidence from this literature review, I identify becoming a global citizen as a transformative learning process of changing perceptions on global citizenship (value-based) and improving skills to thrive in the globalised world (skill-based).

## **2.1. Context: Globalisation and Internationalisation of Higher Education**

The first part of this literature review highlights the complexity of globalisation and its impacts on the internationalisation of higher education worldwide. Globalisation, as a key influencing phenomenon in the higher education sector, is brought into focus first and is then followed by the internationalisation of higher education. The literature indicates that the influence of globalisation on higher education creates challenges and opportunities for research that are no longer constrained by national borders (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009). On one hand, some scholars view this trend as an assault on national culture, security and autonomy (Humes, 2008), and a threat to education's function as a public good (Marginson, 2014). On the other hand, globalisation offers potential and possibility for cultivating GC (Appadurai, 2005). In this review, globalisation and its impact on higher education are explored through four interrelated dimensions: political, technological, socio-cultural and economic. Following that, the reality and trend of international higher education are demonstrated in three aspects. At the centre of globalisation's impact on higher education is neoliberalism, which emphasises economic needs with particular reference to human capital theory and marketisation of public good (Bourn, 2018). Neoliberalism, as the dominant paradigm influencing the form and function of higher education, is discussed extensively in this section.

### **2.1.1. The meaning of globalisation**

Globalisation has far reaching impacts and implications on all aspects of our society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bhagwati, 2004; Altbach, 2007; Bourn, 2018). As a phenomenon and concept, globalisation is a “complex and multifaceted idea with political/ideological, socio-cultural, economic and technological dimensions driving change in societies across the world” (Maringe, 2011, p.29). Although there is no universal definition of globalisation, it is generally accepted as relating to the global reach of exchanging goods and services, the formation of gigantic multinational enterprises and organisations, and the negligibility of time differences because of the instantaneous communication and virtual connections all over the world (Pang, 2006, p.6). According to Held and McGrew (2000), the complex processes of globalisation can be regarded as the expansion and acceleration of interconnectedness worldwide, and interactions in economic, social, political and cultural relations. As a result of expanding global interconnections, nations and individuals experience greater interdependence with tendencies of both homogenising and differentiating (Beck, 2006). It is widely believed that globalisation is transforming the lives of people all around the world and driving a revolution in the organisation of work, the production of goods and services, the norms of local cultures as well as education systems in every nation.

In the higher education sector, Bourn (2018) points out that the debates on globalisation start with Giddens (1991), who defines globalisation as a phenomenon in which events happening anywhere in the world have a direct and significant impact on other societies and economies globally. Based on this definition, Knight and de Wit (1997) find that globalisation affects each country or individual in different ways due to a nation’s history, political system, culture and priorities. These two insights changed the way we understand our relationship to the world and are still relevant today. One of the most frequently used definitions of globalisation is from Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009), who view globalisation as a key reality of the twenty-first century, shaped by an increasingly integrated global economy, advanced information and communication technology, the unified role of the English language, a well-established international knowledge network, and other forces beyond the control of institutions and governments. There is a common agreement in the literature that globalisation involves the diffusion of ideas, cultures, technologies and capital. As noted,

globalisation is something more than universalisation and internationalisation. It's not just westernisation, modernisation or market liberalisation.

Globalisation intensified the usage of "Western" and "Eastern" to describe national identities and cultures. The overarching concept of the West was forged in opposition to ideas such as "the East", "the Orient", "Eastern barbarism", "Oriental despotism", or the "Asiatic mode of production" (Milner, 2015). On one hand, the meaning of the West and East in a given context depends entirely upon who is invoking the term and for what purpose (McNeil, 1991). On the other hand, the notion of the West was temporalized and rendered as a representative of the progress and modernity, transformed from a directional concept to a socio-political concept (Bavaj, 2011). Indeed, since the 20th century, Western culture was exported worldwide through the emergent mass media in the form of film, radio, television and recorded music, and the development of international transport and telecommunication played a decisive role in modern globalization. In this modernization trend, Gao (2010) argues that the West has been contemptuous and arbitrary in depicting and stereotyping the Eastern world as primitive, irrational and inferior.

In its prevailing modern usage, "Western" often refers to Europe and to areas whose populations largely originate from Europe, through the Age of Discovery's imperialism (Milner, 2015). According to Chinese literature (e.g. Cai, 2008), the Western or the West includes various regions, nations and states, consisting of the majority of Europe, North America, and Oceania. In contrast, the Eastern world referred to Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. China's definition of the "Western" often reflects McNeil's (1991, p.11) explanation that "The Western world is also known as the Occident (Latin word *occidens*, "sunset, West"), in contrast to the Orient (Latin word *oriens*, "rise, East") or Eastern world. " Moreover, the West might mean the Northern half of the North–South divide, the developed countries of the Global North (Bavaj, 2011). As such, the term "Western world" is sometimes interchangeably used with the term First World or developed countries, stressing the difference between First World and the Third World or developing countries. In this sense, "Western" could be imagined as a civilization which is opposite to China's "Eastern" culture independent of locale. Many scholars (e.g. McNeil, 1991; Zheng, 2014) contend that

the notion of the West and its relation to globalization is a false, dangerous model which excludes the rest of humanity.

As globalisation is a multifaceted reality, its characters and impacts on higher education can be viewed through four overlapping and interrelated dimensions: political ideology, technological development, socio-culture and economy (Maringe, 2011). These dimensions are particularly important “when it comes to looking at the relationship of education and learning to global forces” (Bourn, 2018, p.21). In the first dimension of supranational political influence, the process of globalisation is portrayed as reshaping national borders, changing solidarity in and between countries, and fundamentally impacting the constitution of national ideologies and identities (Scholte, 2005). Appadurai (2005) suggests that although globalisation is characterised by paradoxical transfers that create acute social problems, one positive fact is that it can encourage an emancipatory approach through opening people's minds to imagination; it empowers people to consider migration, resist state violence, and pursue social justice, as well as design various forms of social association across national borders. Bourn (2018, p.22) goes further and notes that individuals relate their sense of identity to both national and global influences in different ways. Some “anti-globalists” may even reject the practices of globalisation. Extreme forms of this can be the racist promotion of specific cultural identities above others. For others, it can take the form of economic protectionism.

In the second dimension relating to technological development, the determinants driving the development of globalisation are seen as new communication technologies that stimulate world trade and cultural exchange. Pang (2006) states that globalisation has led to the emergence of a knowledge economy, in which the significance of information and communication technology (ICT) is coming to outweigh that of capital and labour. Knowledge generation and transmission is now accessible to a broader field of actors across the globe through the Internet (Humes, 2008), because ICT has created a universal means of instantaneous contact and simplified scientific communication (Altbach, et al. 2009). Appadurai (2000, p. 53) considers the mass media as the “new power in social life”, with which “more people across the world are now provided with images of lives and possibilities not previously imaginable”. Bourn (2018) notes that the expansion of mass media has provided opportunities for a range

of different voices to be heard, as part of the learning process and social dialogue. In this way, technological globalisation can provide opportunities to look at issues from different perspectives, as a direct result of instant access to information from elsewhere in the world. However, it is noted by the OECD (2018) that people's digital lives can be highly distractive and disconnect them from their surroundings. Moreover, internet users can easily ignore the impact of their words and actions on others through mass media.

In the third dimension of socio-culture, some scholars take a positive view of the ways that the fusion and interaction of culture are accelerated by modern communication technologies and the movement of people, ideas, and lifestyles across national boundaries (Appadurai, 2000). Others contend that these same forces are eroding national cultural identities and leading to cultural homogenisation, most often in the form of westernisation (Knight, 2011). In a positive way, globalisation has also resulted in much greater dialogue and interaction between cultural communities; people are much more mobile than they were a decade ago and, consequently, workforces often reflect a diverse range of cultural backgrounds (Bourn, 2018, p.43). In contrast, Humes (2008, p. 43) describes cultural globalisation as the "McDonaldisation of society" and explains the "homogenising influence" of globalisation across cultural norms and traditions. In particular, the standardisation of values means that morality and behaviour are influenced through media and technological globalisation. Sharpe (2015, p. 231) agrees that cultural globalisation has been shaped as the "modern colonialisation of the masses" by which various societal standards such as religious ideas, law and family values have become standardised into a set of "westernised belief systems".

In the fourth dimension, globalisation is viewed as a product of the emergence of a global economy (Friedman, 2005). Carnoy (1999) argues that globalisation means more competition between countries and a nation's investment, production, and innovation are not limited by national borders. In parallel with the onset of this intensifying competition, Bhagwati (2004) finds that global economic exchange tends to reflect the interests of wealthy, industrialised OECD countries. Pang (2006, p.15) finds that welfare states have adopted a "neoliberal ideology" to promote economic international competitiveness through reducing social expenditure, privatisation,

economic deregulation, free-trade agreements and labour flexibilisation. In this neoliberal ideology and through economic competition, globalisation tends to concentrate wealth, knowledge, and power in those already possessing these elements (Altbach & Knight 2007). As Appadurai (2005) suggests, globalisation is an uneven economic process that creates a fragmented and uneven distribution of all social resources including wealth, education and social care.

While globalisation attempts to improve economic, political and cultural ties in the global domains, it has been subjected to opposition and scepticism (Giddens, 1990; Wang, 2020; Marginson, 2021). Especially, there are strong critics against the neoliberal proposals on globalisation. Scholte (2005) argues that the dominance of the neoliberal approach to globalisation has emphasised marketisation, liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation, while values such as security, equality and democratic decision making have been relegated to a secondary role in policy making. In this case, political democracy which protects human rights is threatened by consumer democracy in which citizens exercise power by making choices in a free market (Friedman, 2005). Moreover, Haynes (2008) claims that economic-purpose-driven globalisation reduces citizens to merely workers, consumers and social victims. Nonetheless, contrary to the dominant neoliberal definition of globalisation, Bourn (2018, p.30) provides a new dimension of globalisation for educators and learners as a means to “understand different worldviews”, to “make sense of a rapidly changing world” and to be able to “look at issues critically”.

### **2.1.2. Globalisation’s impact on higher education**

Globalisation in higher education is inevitable. Because the main bases of globalisation are intensive knowledge exchange and innovation, globalisation has a profound impact on higher education systems worldwide (Carnoy, 2002). In other words, with the aim of knowledge creation and dissemination regardless of national borders, higher education is one of the most globally interconnected aspects of human activity (Marginson, 2021). Globalisation and its dominant neoliberal economic paradigm have fundamentally changed the form and function of contemporary

universities (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001). The neoliberal paradigm has steered higher education towards commercialising, employment and competition. Higher education is therefore considered in terms of human capital formation and commonly framed as students' investments in their future prosperity as employees (Henry et al., 2001; Scholte, 2005). Clifford and Montgomery (2011) view internationalisation and capitalisation in higher education as the main response for universities to adjust to the forces of globalisation. In this response, universities have become more marketised and employment-focused (Bourn, 2009) and there has been a shift in emphasis from public good to private good (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). Commercial forces thereby have a legitimate or even a dominant place in higher education under the impact of globalisation.

Current globalisation processes contribute to a growing demand for the workforce as a whole for additional skills and continuing education for everyone (Bourn, 2018). Almost everywhere in the world, higher education systems are now under pressure to produce individuals who can compete for their own positions in the global context and who can legitimate the state by strengthening its global competitiveness (Daun, 2002). Bourn (2018, p. 41) agrees that "central to many university policies is their role in developing some form of global elite, of graduates with the skills to lead and to become entrepreneurs in the global economy". Indeed, the commercialisation of higher education has significantly changed the form and function of the higher education sector. Arguably, the commercial focus on graduate skill development falls short of the espoused aims of universities to educate socially responsible global citizens.

Upon the challenges facing universities under the impact of globalisation, scholars have concluded several strategies and trends in internationalised higher education. Carnoy (1999) posits that universities' responses to globalisation must be based on three key factors: their interpretation of students' roles in the context of the global economy; their real economic situation and financial resources; and their ideological position on the role that public education plays in their development goals. According to Bate (2002), the best ways for higher education systems to catch up with globalisation trends are to determine the appropriate skills and attitudes required by the global environment and market, build an appropriate global curriculum and synchronic network, develop an up-to-date technologically facilitated pedagogy, and



implement universal standards by which levels of skill can be examined. Based on these suggestions, Altbach and Knight (2007) conclude that the impact of globalisation on universities is the growing market for international students, the increasing emphasis on English as the lingua franca for academic communication, and the use of information technology for dissemination of knowledge such as online education.

Universities are playing a central role in preparing future human resources and cultivating a sense of social conscience. At the institutional level, globalisation can be reflected in the way that increasing numbers of universities have embraced extended missions, prevalently promoting service to a community of students that reaches beyond local and national borders and intending to create “global citizens with global competencies” (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009, p.27). Indeed, more and more universities are revising their mission statements to emphasise their commitment to globalisation and market themselves as a “Global University”. For instance, the slogans of three UK universities attempt to promote their global perspective: University College London (London’s Global University), University of Nottingham (Britain’s Global University) and Birmingham University (A Global University at the Heart of an Ambitious City). After reviewing university mission statements, Rhoads and Szelenyi (2011) assert that HE’s mission should be related to using knowledge capacities to advance their citizens’ social lives and improve human conditions. Clifford and Montgomery (2011) argue that universities should transform students into global citizens who are not only academically qualified, but also capable of contributing to a global society. This obligation requires higher education’s value change from neoliberal capitalism to egalitarian and sustainability visions.

The conflict between the market and social responsibility are highlighted through the discussion above. In light of this conflict, the emergence of globalisation calls for universities to act on applying a right form of educational approach to enhance global social relations. Bourn (2009) advocates for university students to respond to globalisation by understanding different worldviews and making sense of global issues. This raises issues about how knowledge is created and used, as well as how one makes sense of one's own identity and position in the world, leading to doubts about one's assumptions and worldview. Rhoads and Szelenyi (2011) also believe that global education is one of the main driving forces to make universities “truly universal”

and that universities are gaining respect by transcending their national boundaries, internationalising their curriculum, and connecting to a global network. Therefore, as Bourn (2018) argued, today's university graduates should have the knowledge and skills to fulfil themselves to not only work in a competitive global economy but also to live in and contribute effectively to a global society

### **2.1.3. Internationalisation in higher education: the reality and trends**

Altbach (2004), Knight (2008), de Wit (2010) and others have written extensively about the complex relationship between globalisation and internationalisation in higher education. Altbach (2004) notes that although globalisation and its impacts on higher education are beyond the control of anyone, internationalisation can be a strategy for societies and institutions to respond to the influence of globalisation and as a way for universities to prepare students for engagement in a globalised world. Therefore, internationalisation accommodates a significant degree of autonomy and initiative (Knight 2008; De Wit, 2010). Altbach (2004, p.6) defines internationalisation as the variety of policies and programmes that governments, universities and individuals implement to respond to globalisation. These typically include “sending students to study abroad, setting up a branch campus overseas, or engaging in some type of inter-institutional partnership” (de Wit, 2019, p.10). In short, over the last three decades, internationalisation has emerged as a phenomenon and strategy for higher education to respond to the changing dynamics of economic, political, socio-cultural and academic objectives.

Over the centuries, the international orientation of universities has shifted gradually and today takes more complex forms and approaches than in preceding centuries. Previously, higher education internationalisation was considered as part of the exchange and dissemination of ideas, cultures, knowledge and skills across nations (Knight, 2011). However, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, internationalisation of higher education has evolved reactively in phase with globalisation, favouring a competitive model in which education is traded as an “international commodity” (de Wit, 2013, p. 14). Van der Wende (2001) calls this a shift in paradigm from cooperation to

competition. Jane Knight has given a comprehensive view on internationalisation in higher education during the current decade as:

For some people, it means a series of international activities, such as academic mobility for students and teachers; international networks, partnerships and projects; new international academic programs and research initiatives. For others it means delivering education to other countries through new types of arrangements, such as branch campuses or franchises using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques. To many it means including an international, intercultural or global dimension into the curriculum and teaching-learning process. Still others see it as a means to improve world rankings of their institution or to recruit the best and brightest international students and scholars. (Knight, 2011, p.22)

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, values in higher education systems are manifested in privatisation, competitiveness, devolution, cost effectiveness, corporate management, quality assurance and performance indicators (Mok & Lee, 2002). There is not one single model that drives internationalisation, but at the same time, internationalisation is still mainly considered in terms of a westernised and predominantly English-speaking paradigm (de Wit, 2019). According to the literature, there are three key trends in international higher education, which are: 1) massification with increasing international mobility; 2) the western-centric knowledge economy; 3) commodification and competition in the marketplace.

#### 1) Massification with increasing international mobility

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, higher education has shifted from being the privilege of an elite social class to massification of human resource and transnational cooperation (van der Wende, 2001). Over the past two decades, de Wit (2011, p. 242) describes the fact that higher education has moved from activities impacting upon a small elite group to a mass phenomenon and big business accessible by the general public. This shift is a result of the socio-economic change from industrial production to knowledge-intensive services (Pang, 2006). At the same time, increasing demand on a highly skilled workforce pushed governments to expand their higher education systems (Carnoy, 2002). Indeed, mass enrolment has created a demand for expanded facilities for higher education worldwide. Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009) point out that this expansion and system growth of higher education requires additional

revenue, causes funding shortages and raises concern for quality. As noticed, governments have been forced to privatise higher education and corporatise public universities in the face of scarce resources and the exponential growth of higher education. Moreover, larger enrolments result in more diverse student expectations and needs.

De Wit (2019) observes that the gross enrolment ratios (GRE) in higher education have far exceeded 50% in developed countries and the supply of educational resources has surpassed demand in some countries such as the USA and New Zealand. As an emerging economy, China's GRE has expanded from 37% to 50%, while other developing countries such as India and Brazil have also experienced massive growth in GRE during the past two decades (Li & Bray, 2007). However, due to demographic reasons and a lack of educational resources, the supply of quality higher education in developing countries is far below their demand for economic growth. Consequently, international students from Asia choose to enter the western academic systems in North America, Australia and Western Europe, which reflects a "South-North phenomenon" (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009). Just as Knight (2012) pointed out, Western countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia have changed their visa and immigration policies in order to attract international students, largely motivated by a desire to maintain economic competitiveness and reap financial benefits by enrolling large numbers of full-fee-paying foreign students.

## 2) The western-centric knowledge economy

Higher education's internationalisation has been heavily influenced by the global knowledge economy – the increasingly technology and science-based globalised set of economic relations that requires high levels of knowledge, skills, and sophisticated international relations (Pang, 2006). In some respects, the knowledge economy works in favour of western countries and against the interests of developing countries. Huang (2008) finds that the major international knowledge centres are in English-speaking countries in the western world. Indeed, the role of English as the dominant language of scientific communication gives a significant advantage to the US and the UK and to other wealthy English-speaking countries. Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009) find that the ownership of publishers, databases and other key resources are in the hands of western universities and multinational companies, due to the common use of

English as the only language for global knowledge exchange. Knight (2012) adds that international scientific meetings are exclusively in English and English-language products of all kinds dominate the international academic marketplace in the knowledge economy.

### 3) Commodification and competition in the marketplace

In the competitive and widely open global economy, higher education institutions have no choice but to adjust to being more efficient, productive and flexible. As Friedman (2005) states that nations' capability of competition in the global economy is closely dependent on their ability to offer effective education to their citizens, whereas the goals of universities are dependent on the nations' specific economic development needs. This "self-capitalising model" of education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 152) has replaced the more liberal humanist conceptualisations of higher education (Nussbaum, 2010). According to Marginson (2014), this trend is mainly due to the rising dominance of neoliberal agendas and the adapting of commercial enterprises by universities. This increasingly marketised HE environment treats students as customers whose satisfaction and employability rates have superseded the traditional goal of HE, which was to cultivate well-informed citizens with critical thinking abilities.

#### **2.1.4. Global Higher Education amid COVID-19**

In today's hyper-connected world, the COVID-19 pandemic spread across borders and across people of all races, nations, socioeconomic classes, genders, ages, and faiths. During this pandemic, there are numerous debates on globalisation and deglobalisation (Marginson, 2021). While globalisation has certain effects on the virus's spread from a regional outbreak to a global pandemic, it also creates opportunities for sharing technology, resources and methods across nations and facilitates collaboration to combat the infection (Wang, 2020). On one hand, the entire world's population is linked and suffers from the same issue. All humans are facing a similar destiny during a global crisis. On the other hand, the infection necessitates social separation and travel limitations so that countries must restrict borders. As such, all countries prioritise their national interests and security instead of cooperation

across borders, thereby bringing about more protectionism and xenophobia (Zhao, 2020). Given this mix of globalisation and nationalism, it's uncertain as to how globalisation will respond to the pandemic in both short and long terms. As Wang (2020, p.1) addresses, it is crucial to question "how education and students should prepare for the evolving globalization and challenges of deglobalization" during and after this global problem.

Since the breakout of COVID-19 and its worldwide expansion, international students from China have been dealing with tense and difficult situations (Zhao, 2020; Marginson, 2020). As Wang (2020) describes, students were stigmatised as carrying the "Chinese Virus" and were even discriminated in western universities and their host societies. The lockdown forced these students to scramble when in-person classes were cancelled and campuses were shut. They had to decide whether to return home or to remain in self-quarantine far away from home. Even worse, some students returned to China for safety reasons, and were then labelled as "virus carriers" by the Chinese media (Wang, 2020, p.2). In this case, my research explores both major issues of international higher education and concerns of Chinese sojourners' experiences amid this challenging time.

## **2.2. Background: Chinese International Students in the Globalised World**

The previous section presented the grand context of globalisation and international HE. This part of the literature review locates Chinese international students' role in the landscape of the current global education system. To understand Chinese students' GC, it is crucial to investigate the background of China's development and to examine how GC is perceived by the Chinese at various levels. This section begins by telling the story of China's growth in the age of globalisation, followed by demonstrating China's unique view on GC and its influence on university students. This section ends by discussing the new generation of Chinese international sojourners and their impact on international HE.

### **2.2.1 China's development in the age of globalisation**

Over the past four decades, China has steadily developed into an emerging force in the global economy and key player on the international stage (Hu, 2017; Wang, 2019). China has transformed from a country largely closed off to the rest of the world to one that embraces and drives globalisation since its Reform and Opening Up policy launched in 1979 (Chen, et al. 2003). Over the past four decades, China's GDP has increased 22.8 times from \$149.5 billion in 1979 to \$12.24 trillion in 2017, achieving an annual growth rate of 9.5% and contributing to 30% of overall world growth (World Bank, 2019). This rapid growth has made China the world's second-largest economy and largest developing country, thus being uniquely placed as a bridge between emerging and developed nations (Wang, Weaver & Xue, 2019). Embodied in the process of globalisation, China is experiencing enormous change in its economic structure, international collaboration, global connectivity and technological advancement, while contributing to and benefitting from globalisation through increasing cross-border flows of capital, goods and people (Wang, 2019). Indeed, China has become the hub of production, investment, import and export, which has a profound impact as a world leading power in the era of globalisation.

Rapidly developing into an influential power in the globalised world, China is deepening its economic and exchange relations with the rest of the world, offering enormous possibilities for its population as well as other nations and people across the world. (Wang, Weaver & Xue, 2019). It is commonly recognised that China's production economy is being rapidly overtaken by the upcoming knowledge economy and China is enhancing its competitive edge through the adoption and development of multinational knowledge-based industries and institutions (Cai, 2008). China's ever-growing status in international trading and politics has also strengthened connections, communication and cooperation with the rest of the world (Wang, 2019). As Overholt (2005) perceives, globalisation has deeply shaped contemporary Chinese society and China has benefited from its adoption of different foreign policies and systems: China is now the country that sends international students throughout the world seeking best practice; it adapts not just foreign technology and international corporate systems, but also a wide variety of western institutional practices and knowledge. The most significant impact of globalisation on China is the adoption of competition as a central

economic practice and the implantation of the English language as the second language in China's education system at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Overholt, 2005). Since then, as Mok (2017) noted, these two main trends have deepened within China's new generation over the past two decades.

With its steady development and rising presence on the international stage, China is now well-placed to play a constructive role in tackling new challenges associated with globalisation. China Daily, a newspaper deemed as the mainstream guideline of Chinese government policy and an official instrument of China's public diplomacy (Hartig, 2019), has been extensively reporting China's position in the trend of globalisation and attributes the new Silk Road (known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)) to China's step into becoming a global power. According to China Daily (2017), the revival of the ancient Silk Road as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by President Xi Jinping in 2013 signals China's ambitious plan to link with 71 countries from South-east Asia to Eastern Europe and Africa, that account for half the world's population and a quarter of global GDP. BRI is an important vector for globalisation as it brings about closer economic and political collaborations between countries along the Belt and Road (Linney, 2019) and helps promote infrastructure and technological development to all corners of the globe (Wang, 2019). However, Hu (2017) points out that despite of its leading role in the process of globalisation through BRI's construction, China is still regarded as a developing country which lags the western world in terms of its standard of living and level of modernity.

Under significant growth at the macro-level, China has prioritised cultivating talents with global competency at the centre of its globalisation strategy, which advocates a "people-centred globalisation" (Wang, 2019, p.218). There is a clear link between China's globally driven economic boom and the increasing need for university graduates to have a global mindset (Yan, 2015). China aims to transform its economic structure from heavy and low-cost manufacture-based to a technology-intensive modernised model towards a direction of "modernisation, industrialisation, urbanisation and internationalisation" (China Daily, 2017). This transformational change is accelerating China's growth into a knowledge and skill-based economy with the need for more well-educated human resources with global skills (Cai, 2008). To meet this new demand, the government and families are increasing their funds and



efforts to support Chinese students' English learning and international education (Fong, 2011). With a strong belief that transnational higher education will improve all-rounded skills, add value to academic qualification, enhance employability and develop a global outlook, more and more Chinese students are eager to engage in study abroad programmes (Zheng, 2014).

China has entered the phase of "circulation of global talent" and Chinese overseas returnees have played a major role in China's development (Wang, 2019, p. 218). The construction of China's knowledge economy through cultivating global citizens with international study experience has become a trend in Chinese society (Ding & Sun, 2009). Although some anti-globalists see the trend of globalisation and increasing number of Chinese students who learn English and study abroad as an assault on Chinese national culture and autonomy (Haynes, 2008), it is widely accepted that the acceleration of globalisation in China has created demand for global education and global citizenship development, with the aim of preparing students to better understand these ongoing processes and function in an increasingly globalised world (Cai, 2014). In other words, cultivating GC is increasingly important for China as a nation to remain a major global player politically, economically and socially (Neubauer & Zhang, 2015). The impact of globalisation on Chinese students' international mobility and global citizenship offers great opportunities for study and research, which is no longer limited by national boundaries (Chen, 2015). The following section explores the literature on Chinese international students and draws a specific focus on their experiences in the UK.

## **2.2.2. Chinese Version of Global Citizenship**

### **2.2.2.1 China's perspective on global citizenship**

As early as more than 2,000 years ago, Chinese philosophers painted the idea of an optimal world of great unity to encourage Chinese citizens to construct a better society of equality and harmony at home and abroad (Gao, 2010; Fong, 2011). The concept of global citizenship can find its seeds in Chinese traditional ideology of world

citizenship, such as “a world of grand unity” (Da Tong Shi Jie), “all within the four seas are brothers” (Si Hai Jie Xiong Di) and “cosmopolitan” (Si Hai Wei Jia). In the era of globalisation and the context of China’s citizenship in the globalised world, Chinese contemporary scholars have also made efforts to construct a Chinese version of GC. Wang (2011) proposes that the development of Chinese citizens should uphold three principles: respecting universal human rights, blending nationalism with international democracy, and fostering social participation. Zhao (2013) articulates that Chinese students should be provided with chances “to develop global awareness and international understanding and prepared to engage in the pursuit of well-being for all worldwide” (p.117). Qi and Shen (2015) advocate Chinese citizens to acquire a dual identity as “global citizens” who “transcend narrow national citizenship based on traditional geopolitical divisions” and provide solutions to the “burning global issues of the day for the benefit of all mankind in our time” (p. 267).

Today’s world faces a wide variety of serious global challenges such as climate change, the inequality gap and infectious diseases, which cannot be effectively resolved without the participation of China (Wang, 2019). These circumstances call for the involvement of Chinese citizens as responsible global citizens (Chen, 2011). According to studies on Chinese citizenship education (e.g. Gao, 2010; Zheng, 2014), Chinese students have changed their goal towards higher education from nationalism-oriented civic education to skill-centred global citizen education which emphasises English language ability and fosters international awareness. To understand this change, Qi and Shen (2015) find it’s crucial to promote GC in China: only when Chinese citizens have the idea of GC and identify themselves as global citizens, will they have the “awareness of global responsibility to address global challenges” and can “transcend their narrow patriotism” with “an open-minded attitude to other cultures and ways of life” (p. 269). Indeed, through promoting the values and action of GC, China will not only win the respect of people around world, but also improve its international image and positive influence (Qi & Shen, 2015).

Despite the increasing importance of promoting GC in China, there exists an intrinsic difference in the practise of GC between China’s perspective and the Western approach. According to Bourn (2018), the distinctive characteristic of GC is to awaken an individual’s potential to make a difference at both local and global levels through

“critical reflection on one’s assumptions about the world” and “willingness to seek a more just and sustainable world” (p.288). This contrasts sharply with China’s moral and political-ideological education which “emphasise the values of maintaining the social order of loyalty and conformity, rather than the pursuit of social change” (Zhao, 2013, p.117). In other words, China’s predominant strategy of unity and harmony in a globalised world (Wang, 2019) somehow conflicts with the original ideal of advocating cultural diversity and social justice for GC (Davies, 2006). Moreover, Li and Feng (2008) argue that the Chinese value of nationalism, expressed as a collective consciousness and national stability, plays a much more dominant role than GC in China’s civic education agenda. Nevertheless, the accelerated debate on GC for Chinese citizens is inseparable from the context in which China has been increasingly involved in the globalisation process and its vision on globalisation.

#### 2.2.2.2. China’s vision on globalisation

China’s place in the globalised world is complicated and non-negligible. China’s 5,000-year civilisation of rise, decline, struggle and re-emergence has significantly shaped the way the Chinese view themselves, the outside world, globalisation and their relationship to the globalised world (Fong, 2011). On one hand, Chinese people are very proud of their flourishing culture and the achievements of China’s economic development (Wang, 2019); On the other hand, most Chinese still see the West as the global centre of modernity and contemporary culture (Qin, 2012). In addition, Anderson (2012) points out that despite modern China’s role as a key global influence and its deep integration into the neoliberal world economy, Chinese people’s “collective memory and cultural narrative of victimisation” has created a sense of resistance against the western ideology of GC, so that the only path to engage Chinese people in the globalised world is through implanting “global citizenship with Chinese characteristics” (p. 9). To achieve this, Chinese citizens must transcend nationalism to “Chinese GC” for good intentions towards world harmony and common prosperity (Qi & Shen, 2015, p.265). This so-called Chinese GC is manifested as China’s vision of globalisation and expressed as “building a community with a shared future for mankind” in China’s development agenda.

Since Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke at the United Nations Summit titled “Work Together to Build a Community with Shared Future for Mankind” in January 2017, the idea has gained international recognition for presenting China's vision of globalisation (Xinhua, 2018). This vision advocates building a world of “lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness, tolerance and a clean and beautiful world”, which is the common value of all mankind (Hou, 2019, p.413). At the 19<sup>th</sup> China National Congress, President Xi stated China’s role in “the community for mankind” as:

The dream of the Chinese people is closely connected with the dreams of the peoples of other countries; the Chinese Dream can be realised only in a peaceful international environment and under a stable international order.....China will continue its efforts to safeguard world peace, contribute to global development, and uphold international order (China Daily, 2017).

This idea was also enshrined by the UN Security Council, the Human Rights Council and the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, turning China’s vision of globalisation and GC into an international consensus (Xinhua, 2018). Hou (2019) interprets that China’s vision of building a community of shared destiny starts from the common interests of all mankind, “transcends the western power-centred globalisation of hierarchical hegemony to pluralistic world governance and equal participation” (p.413). Indeed, China’s role in globalisation is to adhere to the path of common development, pursue a mutually beneficial and win-win strategy, share its development experiences and opportunities with the rest of the world, and achieve common development (China Daily, 2017).

### **2.2.3. Chinese Students in Global Higher Education**

#### **2.2.3.1 Chinese study abroad: reality and trend**

The pattern and trend for Chinese students studying abroad are constantly evolving, resulting from China’s development and students’ perceptions of their experiences in host countries (Chan, 2012; Wu, 2014). At an earlier stage before the 1980s, the purpose for Chinese students’ overseas study was to learn theories of Marxism and Leninism to help build a new socialist society for the demands of the Communist system, and students fully financed by the government were selected based on their

political background and professional qualifications (Cai, 2013). As the political situation in China changed in the 1980s and 1990s, shifting from a planned economy to a socialist market-based economy under the impact of the Open Doors policy introduced in 1978, the purpose of Chinese students' study abroad changed from politically centred to academically oriented (Wu, 2015). Meanwhile, the Chinese government adopted a capacity-building policy to support international mobility as a strategy to improve China's workforce in areas of science and technology, which are regarded as the essence of the Chinese economy (Chen et al., 2003). With the government's financial support, the previous generation of Chinese international students was committed to bringing advanced knowledge and technology from western universities to China to build its knowledge economy (Hu, 2017).

Decades of economic reforms have transformed China's society from "one formed through shared poverty to one built on uneven wealth" and rapid economic growth has amplified the demand for high-quality international education (Qin, 2012, p. 59). Since the 1990s, the number and proportion of self-funded students has greatly increased, while the role of government has changed from direct sponsorship and restriction to encouragement and facilitation (Wu, 2014). This generation of Chinese students, born after 1979's One Child Policy, are generally only children and thus benefit economically from several generations' resources to pursue overseas education (Fong, 2011). Since the beginning of the 2000s, China has joined the WTO to expand its connections with global markets and China's economic growth has been rapid, as a skilled workforce with a global outlook has become high in demand (Iannelli & Huang, 2014). Under these conditions, more and more self-funded students are well represented in many business-related fields including management, economics and finance (Yang, 2018). By 2019, more than 90 per cent of Chinese international students were fully self-funded and China has been the largest student-exporting country in the international education market (MOE China, 2019).

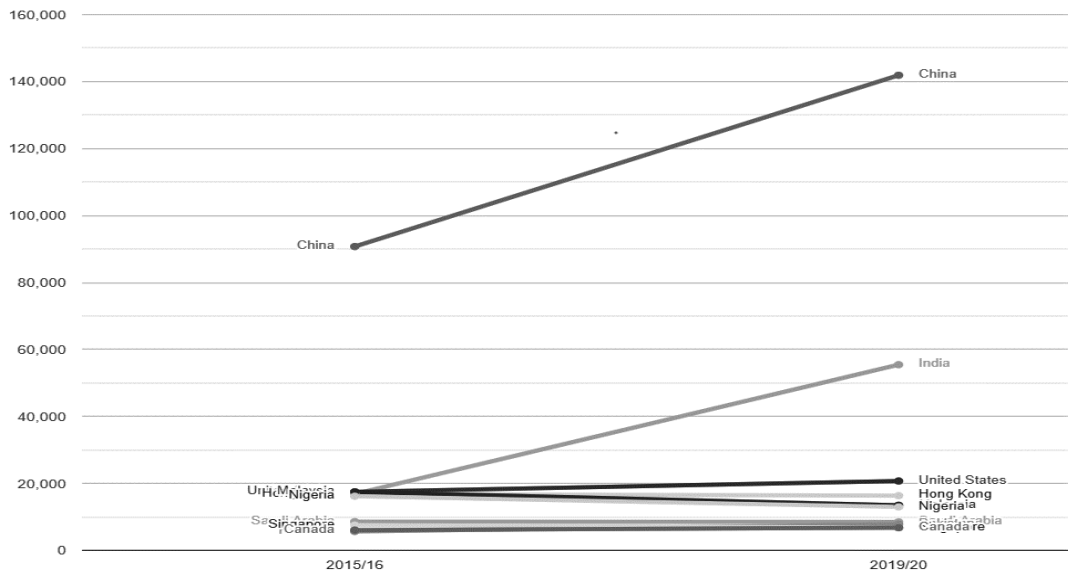
Chinese students studying overseas has been one of the most influential factors "shaping the direction of international education since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Esaki-Smith, 2020, p. 24). According to UNESCO (2020), the number of Chinese students studying abroad has grown nearly by 1,600 percent since 2000, with over 660,000 studying overseas in 2018. To explain this dramatic trend, Fong (2011, p. 218)

applies a neoliberal approach and states that more and more Chinese students truly believe that life abroad is simply better by offering them “more freedom, material wealth and opportunity”. However, according to the most renowned annual report on Chinese international students – The White Book of Study Abroad 2020 – students’ understanding of the value of studying abroad has changed from a neoliberal perspective to the pursuit of self-improvement and global competency. While the number of Chinese international students is increasing, the proportion of them who study abroad for immigration, professional advancement and financial return is decreasing (Yang, 2019). In other words, more and more Chinese students regard international education as a channel to realise their personal value through gaining international experience and a global outlook (New Oriental, 2020).

#### 2.2.3.2. Chinese international students in the UK

The number of international students from Mainland China at UK universities has soared from 87,895 in 2014 to 141,870 in 2020, making up 35% of all international students (HESA, 2021). This means that China has sent more students to the UK than any other country and Chinese international students are an important income source for universities (BBC, 2020). The UK has been a popular destination for Chinese students not only because the English language has become the international language of academic and business communication (Altbach 2004), but also for the quality and reputation of the UK’s higher education system (Hu, 2017). Universities in the United Kingdom have generally welcomed Chinese students, not just for their financial support to British higher education, but also for bringing a great deal of cultural variety to campus (McGowan, 2017). Furthermore, they have made a tremendous contribution to academic research on many levels, which should not be overlooked. (UKCISA, 2018). Altbach (2019, p. 20) observes that higher education systems in the UK “have come to depend on Chinese students for their increasingly important international student enrolments – and are to some extent dependent on these students to balance budgets and, in certain cases, to fill empty seats”. As noticed, Chinese international students are playing a vital role in the UK’s higher education system.

#### **Figure 2. 1 Number of Chinese Students in the UK (2015-2020)**



Source from: HESA (2021)

Figure 2.1 demonstrates that the number of students from China has increased by 51,140 or 56% over the five-year period from 2015/16 to 2019/20 (HESA, 2021). The majority (85%) of Chinese international students in the UK are postgraduate students, and around 70% of them are young female students (New Oriental, 2020). To understand this phenomenon, several studies report that Chinese postgraduate students appreciate the better quality of the UK’s education system, dislike China’s less sophisticated way of learning (Mok, 2017), and are keen to develop their language competencies and intercultural skills through interactions in the classroom and daily life (McGowan, 2017). Moreover, UK universities are highlighted as providing relatively high levels of “rigorousness, thoroughness and fairness” by Chinese postgraduate students (Bamber, 2014, p. 53). In contrast, through interviews with Chinese postgraduate female students in the UK, Hu (2017) suggests that Chinese students’ primary motive for getting a master’s degree in the UK is non-academic related: a fast-track master’s programme within one year (compared with three years in China and two years in the USA) and the opportunity to travel in Europe is found as the most attractive factor for young female students. This could explain why the number of female students in the UK outweighs males.

While Chinese international students have become an important financial resource in the UK higher education system, some scholars have critiqued this trend. Altbach

(2019, p.20) raised concerns that the increasingly large number of Chinese students in the UK, which made up 41% of non-European Union students in 2019, has created “an unsustainable situation of overdependence” and “a dramatic and negative set of changes” in the UK’s higher education system. Esaki-Smith (2020) adds that while the flow of Chinese international students in the UK continues to grow, the pace is likely to be slowed significantly due to a declining economic growth rate and improved domestic provision of higher education in China. Moreover, Mok, Han, Jiang, and Zhang (2017, p.25) point out that the vast number of Chinese students studying transnationally may perpetuate social mobility issues and intensify education inequality in both China and the UK, thus leading to “the emerging trend of anti-globalism and anti-internationalisation”. Nevertheless, according to a recent comprehensive report by Johnson et al (2021) from Harvard Kennedy School and London Kings College, the importance of international students from China and partnership with Chinese institutions is critical not just for the UK economy, but also for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals towards a more diverse and inclusive world.

#### 2.2.3.3 The characteristics of Chinese students

Education and the desire for learning are intrinsic to Chinese culture and tradition. Confucianism and the official examination system are two longstanding and distinguishing characteristics of Chinese education heritage, which integrated national, family and personal interests in China (Liu, 1992). Deeply rooted into the consciousness of the Chinese people of over 2,000 years of practice, Confucian’s value of education is essential for understanding the beliefs and attitudes of contemporary Chinese students (Yang, 2018). Confucian thought places learners’ self-cultivation through knowledge acquisition at the cornerstone of not only the family’s honour and state’s prosperity, but also the whole world’s harmony and peace (Qin, 2012). Therefore, Chinese students are still influenced by the traditional philosophy of Confucianism that emphasises collective harmony with the community and the environment, which is different from the western culture that encourages individualism (Gu & Guo, 2015). Furthermore, higher education and qualifications are highly valued and have consequentially operated as key mechanisms of social mobility in Chinese traditions and the present knowledge economy (Mok, 2017).



The main themes, which scholars have identified as being important to Chinese international students, are noted as critical thinking ability, intercultural communication and the use of English for academic purposes. Among the majority of the literature on the learning style of Chinese students, critical thinking, which forms a vital element of Western education methodology, is viewed as the weakest point of Chinese learners (Hu, 2017). Huang (2008) finds that Chinese students studying in the UK report a high level of satisfaction with British higher education, but that they would hope for more opportunities for cultural mixing with UK students. McGowan (2017) argues that Chinese students' foremost initial concern was their problem with the English language, especially idiomatic or colloquial usage. Several studies have highlighted differences between Chinese international students and western students. Through a qualitative study on Chinese postgraduates in the UK, Turner (2006) draws on evidence of what is generally thought of as the characteristics of a Chinese postgraduate student and those of a British student, and these are shown in Table 2.1:

**Table 2. 1 The Model of Chinese Student & British Student**

The 'model' Chinese student	The 'model' British student
Young, unmarried, full-time student	Any age, studying through many patterns
Works hard to achieve results – the harder working, the better the student	Combines hard work and trained/natural ability
Passive-receptive learner, listens to the teacher and studies privately	Active learner, asks lots of questions and participates vocally in class
Learns mainly by reading and processing knowledge	Learns by combining a range of learning skills – an active, problem-solving-based learner
Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structures and substance of the study according to teacher direction	Meets the teacher's suggestions with independent mind and imagination, studies in trained but personalised style
Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour – a good citizen	Intellectual and moral behaviour not an inevitable combination – the development of individual ethics
Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'	May strive to 'do one's best' against the standard
Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom	Takes a critical stance on knowledge and learning
Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries	Contextualises learning and relates it to other aspects of life in a holistic manner

Source: Turner (2006)

Drawing reference to Turner's conclusions, McGowan (2017) criticises these strands within the more traditional literature repeatedly that inaccurately position Western and Chinese education systems, and their students, in terms of being binary opposites through applying misconceived dichotomies on both sides. For example, where

Westerners are described as individualistic, the Chinese are described as conformists. Or, if Westerners are called adversarial then the Chinese are called harmonious. This research attempts to avoid such labelling and stereotyping but takes into account Chinese students' unique learning styles formed by China's traditional education system.

#### **2.2.4. Chinese students' motivation to study abroad**

The motivations for international student mobility have undergone a significant paradigmatic shift. Until the 1980s international education and mobility were characterised by cooperation, understanding and development, whereas today it is characterised by competition for international students based on economic rationales (Rizvi, 2011). The recruitment of international students has gradually shifted from a “development cooperation framework to a partnership model and now to a commercial and competitiveness model” (Knight, 2011, p.21). Within this new model of international mobility, the number of international students, who are undertaking all or part of their higher education in a country other than their own, increased dramatically from about 240,000 in the 1960s to over 5.3 million in 2017 (UNESCO, 2020). By 2019, developed countries located in North America, Europe and Australia have received almost 70% of total international students, mainly from developing countries such as China, India and Malaysia (OECD, 2020). This growth reflects the shrinking borders between countries with an increasing wealth of the middle classes, particularly in Asian countries. It also reveals the unequal flow of international students in a “South-North direction” mentioned by Altbach (2004) and discussed in the previous section.

There is no doubt that international student mobility has rendered diverse and plentiful benefits to the students, host institutions and global society in general. Beech (2017) attributed this massive growth of international mobility to five factors. Firstly, increasing interconnectedness within globalisation has normalised the processes of mobility and made travel more accessible to a greater number of people. Secondly, there is a common belief that study abroad has numerous professional advantages which enhance employability. Thirdly, a lack of high-quality education resources in developing countries effectively forces many students to consider their options elsewhere. Fourthly, developed countries are keen to recruit international students as

a method of filling various skills shortages, thus supporting research and development. Finally, international education has become a big business to generate high profit for host countries and universities. In addition, Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) point out some other factors that may promote international mobility, such as competition in the international employment market and the perception of higher education as an individual investment.

Much of the research on motivation of study abroad has focused on maximising institutional profits and facilitating students' learning outcomes by looking at academic, intercultural, and social integration factors (Huang, 2008; Blake-Campbell, 2014; Chang, 2016). Other popular topics include changes in the demand and distribution of students with respect to destination and source countries (Mazzarol, 2001; Li & Bray, 2007). Moreover, there are a few discussions on the unanticipated outcomes of student mobility at the macro-management level (Knight, 2011). According to Schweisfurth and Gu (2009, p.464), the literature on the motivation of study abroad differentiates between "symbolic" and "transformative" internationalisation. At the "symbolic" end of the institutional spectrum, universities are becoming active players in the global marketplace and are concerned primarily with the revenue generated by international students (De Wit, 2018). In contrast, a "transformative" approach is concerned with knowledge sharing and cooperation which integrates with the service function and social resistibility of universities (Caruana, 2014). This typology on international mobility is also applicable to interpret different types of relationships between GC and study abroad.

Scholars (e.g. Fong, 2011, Beech; 2014; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015) analyses the motives of Chinese students' international mobility either as professional strategic plans to enhance employment with university credentials and future economic gains with increased human capital or as social-culture personal experiences for self-discovery and improvement. These motives can be explain by global middle-class habitus, government policies and Chinese family culture (Fong, 2011). The interplay and overlap among economic, professional and social-culture motives as contributing factors to students' GC learning and transformation can be complex. These motives influence the students' willingness and efforts to employ strategies to transform their identities and perspectives to engage in a new environment. According to Kishino and

Takahashi (2019) the professional motives are linked to the formal process of study abroad in which the getting a degree becomes the goal. In contrast, social-culture motives are related to the informal part of international learning which aims for intercultural interactions that are fundamental to the development of GC. In recent years, the cultural exposure motives of Chinese international students highlight the increasing interest in the transformative learning for GC during studying abroad (Chen, 2015). As a result, educational institutions employ international outlook enhancing strategies to present themselves as internationalized with diverse student populations to attract more international students.

To fully understand the motivations behind international mobility, the classic model of “push-pull theory”, originated from research by Dorigo and Tobler (1983) on international migration, is commonly used. In the theory, “push factors” are the “adverse conditions in one place which cause an individual to be dissatisfied with that place, and which push him/her to relocate to a new place”, while “pull factors” are “favourable conditions or other attributes which are appealing and pull the individual toward relocating there” (Dorigo & Tobler, 1983, p. 5-9). In the field of international higher education, Altbach (1998) explains that there are positing push (negative) factors in the home countries and pull (positive, attractive) factors in the host country. Push factors are likely to be unfavourable or undesirable elements, which downplay the willingness to stay in one’s home country for education. In contrast, pull factors are those favourable elements in the host country that attract international students to go abroad (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001). Applying the push-pull model, the following section seeks to understand the increasing international mobility at the (national and institutional) macro-level and individual student micro-level.

a) The macro-level influence on international mobility

At the macro level, the motivation and outcomes for increasing international mobility reflects economic globalisation and the internationalisation of higher education (Li and Bray, 2007). Based on the previous discussion on neoliberalism, higher education is viewed as a lucrative industry under globalisation, which brings great benefits to the host countries and even helps states to counter global economic recessions. With the expanding privatisation of higher education in many industrialised countries, especially

in the West, higher education becomes a commodity or a private good which could be traded freely (Altbach, 2004). Altbach and Knight (2007) note that the majority of the world's international students are self-funded and pay more than double the amount of tuition fees of home students. Their payments have become a major source of revenue for universities to fix their financial problems and subsidise other facets such as research outputs and improvements to services for domestic students. International students, not governments or philanthropies, are the largest source of funds for international higher education (de Wit, 2019). Therefore, economic benefits are one of the primary motivations for universities to increase the number of international students.

Applying the “push-pull theory” on the macro level, the increasing number of international students are often caused by the host countries’ “pull factors”, which include conditions such as the availability of financial support, educational opportunities and quality, research facilities, political environment, racial/ethnic conditions, the value of the degree obtained, etc. (Altbach, 1998). With respect to the attraction of a specific host country, the existing literature touches mainly on four dimensions: (1) the quality of the teaching and learning; (2) the opportunity for cultural exposure and encounters; (3) the opportunity to reside and work in the host country after completing the course of study; (4) the improvement of career prospects at home after graduation (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001). Furthermore, international mobility is also triggered by the “push factors” of home countries, when the domestic supply of education cannot meet the domestic demand satisfactorily in terms of quantity or quality (Chen, et al. 2003). However, Li and Bray (2007) point out that there are also “the reverse-pull (negative) factors” in host countries, which discourage international mobility. Those factors often include increasing fees and other costs, restrictive visa application policies on foreign students, and discrimination against students from particular countries due to the political and religious circumstances of host countries.

#### b) The individual students' drives for study abroad

The flow of international students has reflected not just governmental and institutional agendas, but also individual students' aspirations throughout the world. (Knight, 2012). At the micro-level, every decision to study abroad is made by an individual student,

often with emotional and financial support from their immediate family (Chen, et al.2003). There is a range of drives for individual choices to study abroad: economic drivers such as the desire for increased employability, social drivers such as the desire for “international experience”, and personal skill development drivers such as for language and intercultural communication (Bourn, 2020, p.7). When opting to study overseas, most students would go through four separate stages: defining their desire to study abroad, selecting a country to study in, finding an institution, and choosing a place (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001).

The student’s perception of the push factors in their home countries and pull factors in host countries has a significant impact on their decision to study abroad. According to Mazzarol and Soutar (2001), there are four major pull factors that motivate students to study abroad: 1) the student's belief that an overseas course of study will be better than a local one; 2) the student's chance of being accepted into a specific programme; 3) the student's desire to gain a better understanding of foreign civilizations, particularly Western societies; and 4) the student's intention to migrate upon graduation. Similarly, Chen et al. (2003) also articulate four motivations that drive individual students’ international mobility: better job opportunities with a foreign degree, limited capacities of higher education in home countries, the return rates of foreign studies, and the immigration chances after graduation. Li and Bray (2007) notice that there might also exist some reverse push (positive) factors in the home country, which keep students away from studying abroad. Those factors often include a desire to stay with one’s family, awareness of the relevance of domestic education, and increasing internationalisation of domestic institutions.

In sum, both the macro and micro explanations of the “push-pull theory” on international mobility have great significance to any discussion of international higher education and the motivations behind Chinese international students’ experiences in the UK. At the same time, an increasing body of literature finds that university policies to cultivate GC and students’ desires to develop GC have become new “pull factors” for studying abroad (Perez-Encinas, Rodriguez-Pomeda & de Wit, 2020). At the macro level, the promise that studying abroad makes students global citizens is a feature in much of the promotional rhetoric around international education (Streitwieser & Light, 2016). At the micro-level, there are a large number of surveys on international students

reporting their strong motives to gain GC (Tran, 2012). Chen et al. (2003) show that there is a strong demand among Chinese university students for a study abroad experience which can extend their global outlook and so to help them navigate on the cutting edge of globalisation. To gain insight into whether international mobility truly contributes to GC, the next section explores the possibilities and obstacles of developing GC during study abroad.

### c) Why Chinese students study abroad

The push-pull theory of international mobility is widely applied to explain Chinese students' motivations to study abroad (Wu, 2015). In the decision-making process of studying abroad, China's external sociocultural context influences students and their families as a push factor, while conditions abroad and students' aspirations serve as pull factors. The literature on Chinese international students identifies various motivating factors: high quality of overseas courses, desire for a better understanding of foreign societies, attempted migration after graduation, and future job prospects (Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010). Wu (2014) concludes that the main motivations for overseas education involve professional, academic and personal development. It is also noticeable that in recent years an increasing desire to broaden international experience, to develop a better intercultural understanding, to become more autonomous, and to improve global competence was endorsed by many Chinese students who participated in study abroad programmes (Yang, 2018).

Research conducted by Chinese scholars in the past five years have reported three top reasons for Chinese students to study abroad: the expectation of prestige and high-quality education (Yang, 2018), career development (Mok, Han, Jiang, & Zhang, 2017), and the desire for intercultural immersion (Wu, 2014). In terms of gaining prestige, it is widely believed in China that a diploma earned from a Western country is superior to one earned in Chinese institutions, because the quality of higher education in the west is perceived to be much better (Gu, & Guo, 2015). This belief is not only adopted by students and their parents, but is also reinforced by the job market, where employees with a degree from western universities are often treated as more valuable human resources and attract higher salaries (Cai, 2013). Indeed, because prestigious academic qualifications are regarded as significant achievements in China,

families pool resources and assets to support their children's university education abroad (Mok, et al. 2017). Moreover, Yang (2018) finds that many students were not satisfied with China's education system, which overemphasises rote learning for exams, so students choose education abroad to avoid going through the arduous college entrance exams in China and study at world-class universities with much less effort.

In terms of career development, the growing number of Chinese international students is closely related to the region's strong cultural belief that study abroad experience boosts employability (Cai, 2008; Wu, 2015). Yang (2018) finds that the experience of studying abroad is considered to be essential cultural capital to secure a good position in the workforce. Based on a large scale survey by China's top study abroad agency – New Oriental – 89% of employers in China agreed that employees with an international education background have a much higher chance to be hired and promoted, due to their enhanced professional skills and global mindset to solve problems (White Book of Study Abroad, 2020). This finding echoes the statement that “international students are becoming more interested in gaining a tangible return on their tuition investment, which can often be measured in their ability to secure employment after graduation” (Esaki-Smith, 2020, p.25). However, Mok, Han, Jiang, and Zhang (2017) argue that because most Chinese international students come from advantaged family backgrounds and attain jobs through their social connections, there might not be a direct relationship between international mobility and career development. Furthermore, Tran, Blackmore and Rahimi (2021) suggest some Chinese employers might prefer not to hire overseas returnees due to their lack of competency in building interpersonal relationships in Chinese society.

In the aspect of intercultural immersion, Hu (2017) finds that Chinese international students' motivations have changed from academic and career-centred to culture and experience-focused, as the economic status of Chinese families is much higher than in recent years. According to New Oriental (2020), 75% of Chinese students choose to study abroad because they want to experience a different culture and lifestyle to “broaden their horizon”, which is equivalent to gaining a global outlook in the Chinese language. In addition, several studies (e.g. Yuan et al, 2019) indicate that Chinese students' desire for intercultural immersion and a global outlook is largely influenced



by their major and previous experiences. For example, older students and those in MA programmes are more strongly influenced by a need to experience different cultures, while younger students and those in MSc programmes are more strongly driven by academic-related factors (Wu, 2015). In contrast, Bamber (2014) claims that most Chinese international students' cultural immersive experiences are very limited, because Chinese students mix exclusively with their co-nationals and minimise their interactions with all non-Chinese speakers.

#### d) Chinese international students as a soft power

Universities, researchers, and policymakers often see Chinese students as a source of increased soft power (McClory 2016; Bislev, 2017). China's fast development over the last 30 years has aided its emergence as a prominent actor in the globalised world and one of the key drives of globalisation in terms of products, services, and people movement. Central to China's development and globalisation has been the pipeline of Chinese international students exported in the mass tertiary education market. In the introduction of my study, I described the uniqueness of the Chinese students emphasizing the confounding variables of local socio-cultural changes, rapid economic growth, and government foreign policies which have led to an emerging global economic phenomenon with the Chinese international student at the center of the phenomenon (King & Gardiner, 2015). In China, international education has been functioned as a tool for family pride, social status, and bridging gaps in local education provision (Tazreiter et al, 2016). On one hand, international Chinese students provide a direct match for the market needs of western democracies, who increasingly rely on the income provided by international students to make a significant contribution to the funding of universities. On the other hand, as Tazreiter et al, (2016) point out that, while there has seemingly been an alignment between supply and demand in international education, the transformative possibilities for Chinese students have proven to be rather complicated with underlying pragmatic and political motives.

Some scholars (Atkinson 2010; McClory 2016; Bislev, 2017) argue that, although the prime motive of contemporary internationalisation is financial gain for the host universities, Chinese government expects international students as a soft-power tool towards the development of China. From a political and pragmatic perspective, the

Chinese international student is perceived as a tool for the spread of Chinese local cultures globally through reaching the hearts and minds of foreign publics as ambassadorial representatives of China's ideology (Bislev, 2017). As McClory (2016) observed, the motive behind encouraging Chinese students to study abroad is not only to gain the global outlook, but also to enhance China's international influence, improve China's reputation and advance China's technology. Moreover, Atkinson (2010) illustrates Chinese government's increasing interest in using non-governmental elements in its public diplomacy as well as its focus on projecting correct knowledge about China as a way of eradicating potential misunderstandings. Indeed, Chinese international student interact with the host country as a foreigner, as a student, and as a representative of China. King and Gardiner (2015) point out that, as the number of Chinese international students increases around the world, they a more visible group. This reality prompt heated debates about the potential influence of a high number of Chinese students on academic standards, campus life, and host society around the world.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, after presenting the landscape of globalisation and international higher education systems in the previous section, this section places Chinese international students at the centre of investigation. The phenomenon of Chinese students studying abroad in Western countries has been researched extensively in the field of international education over the past two decades. The literature review present Chinese students' international mobility as an organizational internationalization strategy, an individual employability, an aspiration for culture understanding, and motivation foreign policy tool. In the context of increasing numbers of Chinese students in the UK, the existing body of literature emphasises three main areas of study: motivations and variables that affect students' decisions to study in the UK, students' pedagogical and social experiences in British universities and subsequent outcomes of overseas education after students return to China. A majority of these studies is based either on quantitative surveys on large numbers of students reporting broad trends (e.g. Wu, 2014) or on small-scale qualitative studies of one group of Chinese

students from the same universities and courses (e.g. Chen, 2012, McGowan, 2017), while focusing narrowly on one or two aspects of international mobility such as intercultural communications, English language skills, differences of learning styles, use of social media and employability.

Numerous studies have presented negative aspects of Chinese students' experiences while studying and living abroad, in terms of academic challenges (Zhu & O'Sullivan, 2020), psychological distress (Zhao, 2020), culture shock (Wang, 2000), language problems (Zheng, 2014), acculturation difficulties (McGowan, 2017), identity distortion (Yuan, Li, & Yu, 2019) and social-cultural discrimination (Hu, 2017). Indeed, the majority of previous studies on Chinese students' experiences tend to position them from a problem-oriented and deficit model as opposed to transformative learning towards becoming global citizens (Yang, 2019). These studies seem largely to focus on the difficulties that students encounter in relocating to an unfamiliar environment in their host institution and society. This stream of literature also explores the coping strategies of Chinese students and discusses how universities can support them to overcome the challenges (Huang & Turner, 2018). While such a line of research has useful implications for educators and institutions in host countries, the overall discourse seems to be orientated towards dealing with the flaws and weaknesses of Chinese international students. Moreover, among a very few studies (e.g. Huang, 2008; Tran, 2012) addressing Chinese international students' positive change, most of them collect discrete data only once, during or after their overseas study, without exploring the changing processes at different stages in the students' journey.

Regarding understanding Chinese students' personal and professional development through international experiences, most literature (e.g. Mok, 2017; Tran et al, 2021) focus only on investigating returned graduates' employability and intercultural skills. Very few studies have explored Chinese students' all-rounded transformative experiences abroad (Yang, 2018). The body of literature that does explore Chinese students' transformative potential often focuses on their development of intercultural awareness and acquisition of communication skills such as empathy and cultural sensitivity (e.g. Gu & Maley, 2008; Tran, 2012) rather than on their capacity to transform into global citizens. This small proportion of the literature that looks at the transformative power of Chinese sojourns tends to draw on theories of culture shock

and focus on the aspect of personal growth rather than transformation in relation to their global learning. Indeed, there are rarely any research studies linking Chinese international students' potential transformative outcomes to GC, in terms of global outlook, understanding of globalisation, cosmopolitan values, critical thinking and participation in global movements. Furthermore, Chinese international students are mostly described as "both the products and the producers of the global neoliberalism system" and "both consumers and promoters" of the Western capitalised education (Fong, 2011, p.219). As such, Chinese students' international mobility is typically seen as part of neoliberal globalisation that deepens social-economic inequality.

The next chapter explores the notion of GC with the aim of establishing a conceptual framework of what a global citizen is to lay the foundations of my research.

## Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework: GC Development Through Transformative Learning Abroad

### Introduction

This chapter, along with the previous Chapter 2, aims to identify and analyse existing literature related to my main research question, as how does the study abroad experience influence Chinese students' perception of being global citizens? The previous chapter sets up the broad context of this research by explaining the reality of globalisation and its impact on higher education systems worldwide and presents the global phenomenon under research, including China's changing role in globalisation, the increasing number of Chinese international students in the UK and the reasons behind this trend. This chapter establishes the conceptual model of what a global citizen is through an in-depth discussion on the different approaches to perceive GC and potential elements of global skills. The Global Citizen Model formed in this conceptual framework serves as guidance for the research design to evaluate Chinese international students' study abroad processes and outcomes. This chapter also brings in transformative learning theory as the theoretical framework to demonstrate the potential effect of studying abroad on GC development. The final part of this chapter presents the possibilities and limitations of GC development within international mobility through critical analysis and comparison of previous research and debates in global higher education. Drawing on evidence from this literature review, I identify becoming a global citizen as a transformative learning process of changing perceptions on global citizenship (value-based) and improving skills to thrive in the globalised world (skill-based).

### 3.1. Global Citizen Model

To link the myriad amount of research studies on global citizenship (GC) and the research design, a conceptual framework to define the concept of a global citizen is needed. This part of the literature review aims to construct an analytical framework named "Global Citizen Model" to explore and evaluate students' development of GC.

Within such a framework, the social phenomena of Chinese students' studying in the UK can be understood, the findings relating to the students' study abroad experience can be interpreted, and the development of students' GC can be explained. Drawing on evidence from previous literature, my research identifies GC from a value-based approach (students' perception of GC and themselves as global citizens) and a skill-based approach (improvement of skills related to acting as global citizens). In other words, a global citizen is someone with values related to GC and set of skills to live in a globalised world.

In the value-based approach, the research discusses GC from three perspectives (neoliberal, cosmopolitan, critical). The three perspectives will be applied for analysing data from the interviews to map out students' values and understandings of different types of GC. In the skill-based approach, the research investigates what skills students could possibly develop in order to act as global citizens. The results of interpreting students' global skill development will be used to explain and compare their perceptions of GC.

### **3.1.1 The concept of global citizenship**

Global citizenship (GC) has emerged as a concept, practice and metaphor that has captured a wide breadth of notions relating to anything from political identities, moral sensibilities, international competencies, environmental responsibilities and social activism. The concept of GC is based on the idea that all human beings are citizens of the world and this concept, dating back to the ancient world of the Greeks and Romans, comes from Stoics' general philosophical worldview as Socrates' statement exemplifies: "I am not an Athenian or a Greek, but a citizen of the world" (Heater, 1996). The past two decades have witnessed an increasing number of studies and debates on GC across different disciplines such as philosophy, political theory, sociology, education and economics (Heater, 1996; Dower, 2002; Bourn, 2016). Regarding the ambiguity of the term GC, Shultz provides a comprehensive explanation:

While this rich diversity of locations and discourses might suggest that the term "global citizenship" has become emptied of its meaning, it

should be understood to be an indicator of an authentic and extensive engagement within the public sphere that results in multiple theoretical and practical extensions. (Shultz, 2011, pp.13-14)

In the broad background of globalisation, Kerr (1999) views the growing interest in GC as based on many challenges facing all aspects of every human life. Kerr describes the challenges as the impact of the global economy and changing patterns of work; the effect of a revolution in information and communications technologies; an increasing global population; a growing recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities; and the collapse of political structures and the birth of new ones. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Dower (2003) concludes that there are four main challenges that have triggered growing interest in educating global citizens for the changing world: 1) most global problems and issues demand common solutions; 2) the general phenomenon of globalisation is changing everyone's way of living; 3) there is a trend of revived interest in the idea of citizenship and civic education; 4) cosmopolitanism, also called global ethics, has become a controversial approach to resolve the world's complexity. All these challenges imply the importance of a comprehensive understanding of GC and its implications.

Understanding the meaning of GC in the contemporary world involves looking into literature from global organisations and scholars in higher education. According to UNESCO (2015, p.14), GC refers to "a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity". While UNESCO associates GC with global awareness, some scholars view GC as a form of identity: Dower (2002) identifies GC as membership of the whole community inclusive of all humanity, which is wider than any national and local community. Some educators believe GC implies rights and responsibilities: GC is a form of commitment implying significant identity, rights and responsibilities beyond the traditional political state (Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011). In its most widely understood modern sense provided by Nussbaum (2002), GC implies a general belief in the rights of all people to universal justice and basic human dignity; responsibility for the wellbeing of other people and the environment of the whole planet; an obligation to question or even challenge existing power structures and their associated political, social, governmental, and legal activities. These different definitions of GC provide the

research with a values-based approach to explore students' perceptions of GC and their justifications for how they see themselves as global citizens.

In this research, GC is manifested as a multifaceted framework that uses concepts and approaches already been used in other fields, such as intercultural competence, international development, human rights education, education for sustainable development, and global learning to help students achieve their common goals (UNESCO,2015). According to Green (2012), global learning, global education, and global competence are often used synonymously. The word "global" in these three terms often includes the concepts of international (between and among nations), global (transcending national borders), and intercultural (across cultural differences around the world) (Green, 2012). Therefore, different terms with overlapping meanings are used to describe the student learning dimension of GC and internationalisation. As the subject of GC is complex and the purpose of internationalisation seems to be unapparent, it can be difficult to fully explain the underlying concepts and explicit ideals related to GC. Nevertheless, my framework for developing GC aims to be transformative through providing learners with the values, attitudes and skills to contribute to a more inclusive, just, and peaceful global society.

Schattle (2010) assumed that the meaning of GC is to change individuals' perceptions and beliefs about cultural differences among the various societies that comprise the humanity, and to equip the individual with skills to use these newly developed values to promote global development and the achievement of global goals and objectives. In this study, becoming a global citizen is a value and pragmatically based approach to international mobility, where the value-approach results in obtaining a multicultural, multinational, and global dimension of global outlook, and the pragmatic-approach concerns the skills and traits that students develop through the intercultural communication and learning process (Bosio and Torres, 2019). Based on this conception, my GC framework not only presupposes a set of intercultural skills, outlooks and practices which become necessary tools for individuals as they cross boundaries among culturally diverse people or environments, but also include essential values, attitude and capability to deal with the challenge of globalisation (Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1990), actively, constructively and responsibly. However, no notion or framework is without controversy, and no idea is without challenge from other



scholars. My framework of GC will surely spark debates that mirror more extensive intellectual and practical disputes, for better or worse.

As no one particular definition of GC has been adopted in the international education field, there exist several frameworks and scales to measure global citizenship and related concepts. Some focus on evaluating students' global knowledge of the economic, political, social, cultural, technological and environmental world, such as Hett's (1993) Global-Mindedness Scale. Some investigate students' specific skills for GC, such as Hammer's (2003) Intercultural Development Inventory. The most commonly used instrument is Morais and Ogden's (2011) Global Citizenship Scale, designed to measure GC among university students with international experience. This framework sums up the characteristics and skills of global citizens by positing the concept based on three dimensions: social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement. Within each dimension are multiple subdimensions that further reflect the complexity of the construct (see figure below).

Figure 3.1 Global Citizenship Conceptual Model (Morais & Ogden, 2011, p.447)



This framework indicates that GC can be a broad concept that includes values (social responsibility), skills (global competence) and actions (global civic engagement). The widely used terms such as intercultural skills, global knowledge and cosmopolitan values are perceived as sub-themes of GC. These interrelated dimensions align well

with the prominent theoretical and philosophical perspectives described in the literature and resonate with the goals of international mobility. As such, this framework, closely related to my research topic, offers an insight into the conceptual framework, Global Citizen Model, developed later in this chapter.

Regardless of its subjective nature, developing a GC framework is useful and significant in three respects. Firstly, a focus on GC puts the spotlight on the goals of internationalisation and emphasises that international mobility is a means, not an end. Secondly, As Altinay (2010) argues, international education must provide effective tools and values for students to think through their responsibilities and rights to develop their moral compass. GC framework encourages students to consider their obligations to the wider world, thereby affirming its relevance and contributing to global society. Thirdly, the concept of GC creates conceptual and practical connections rather than cleavages. On a practical level, GC offers a model that can connect internationalisation with multicultural education. Despite their varied histories and paths, these initiatives all have the same vital goals of cultural empathy and intercultural competence (Olson et al., 2007). As such, the GC framework represents the process through which learners' perception of global multiculturalism and diversity is changed to be more accommodative of the diverse cultures and interact more effectively in the international context to solve local problems.

### **3.1.2 Global citizenship in higher education**

With many universities articulating the need for internationalising and cultivating global citizens capable of meeting the social, political and economic demands of a more globalised future (Knight 2012), GC has appeared in universities worldwide in the context of globalisation and internationalisation, leading to dramatic shifts in the management, organisation and perceived role of universities (Lilley, et al. 2015). While educating global citizens is frequently expressed as an aim of internationalised higher education, there is little consensus on what a global citizen means conceptually in higher education or how it is implemented from policy to practice (Bourn, 2011). Many universities around the world are responding to the demand for GC by recruiting a

large number of international students, establishing partnerships with overseas institutions, and offering new programmes and services aimed at enhancing the global employability of their graduates (Shultz, 2012). These programmes and services often include elements such as study abroad experiences and specific courses or projects that culminate in the awarding of GC certificates (Blum & Bourn, 2019).

The internationalisation of higher institutions, as well as the promotion of GC, have sparked a number of discussions and debates. The first group of arguments raises the question of whether universities can still provide democratic and critical global citizenship education in a world where globalisation is linked directly to marketisation and commercialisation (Anderson, Dator & Tehranian, 2007). This argument, according to Altbach (2007), derives from concerns about the fundamental driver of internationalisation (neoliberalism) and its influence on university values and practices. Indeed, universities are increasingly viewed by governments as self-interested enterprises competing with other businesses, obscuring their contribution to the common good. (Rizvi, 2007). As such, the main influence of neoliberalism has been the remodelling of universities in the image of private corporations. Amidst these shifting priorities, some academics (Bourn, 2011; Knight, 2012; de Wit, 2019) warn that universities are losing the capacity to nurture critical and socially active citizens, which leads to an academic culture defined by market-driven values of individuality, competitiveness, and consumerism.

The second set of criticisms focuses more specifically on the nature of GC educational programmes that have been established by universities or agents. The development of global citizens through study abroad programmes, international service learning and internationalisation of curriculums are at the centre of this criticism (Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011). As the opportunities for developing GC have expanded and become more widely accessible, the educational programmes have also become commodified, shifting from authentic intercultural experiences to little more than consumer products (Clifford & Montgomery, 2011). Others have argued that the growth of international study programmes for university students in developing countries represents a form of reinforcing stereotypes of domination and colonialism of western culture and values (Lewin, 2009). Moreover, the global citizenship movement, which began in Western universities, tends to be elitist and is practiced and promoted by those with the ability

and means to travel and engage around the globe (Andreotti, 2006). Indeed, the majority GC programmes are driven primarily through liberal education institutions in the global North (Jooste & Heleta, 2017). Therefore, international education programmes with opportunities for GC development are not accessible to all and remain the privileged domain of the economic elite around the world.

As the concepts of GC development are multi-faceted and have diverse educational outcomes in higher education, Bourn (2009, p.18) states three concerns applying to GC development for today's university students: "How are today's students going to understand and to respond to the freedoms, problems and responsibilities they are inheriting? How are today's students going to find their individual roles in a global society? And where do they start?" The first question is about the justification and purpose of different forms of GC development approach; the second question is on how students can participate during and after their GC development process; the third question is the most important one, as what actions students take as global citizens will determine what sort of roles they will play on the global stage.

### **3.1.3 Global citizenship through three perspectives**

A lack of consensus on the definition of "global citizenship" allows for different interpretations of what a global citizen is (Hunter, 2013). The various perspectives in the literature reveal three lenses to interpret GC under a value-based approach: neoliberalism, cosmopolitanism and critical pedagogy (Bourn, 2011; Stein, 2015). The neoliberal approach of GC focuses on skills to work in a global economy; the cosmopolitan approach of GC emphasises universal humanist values; the critical approach of GC addresses the linkages between global learning and reflection (Bourn, 2016). To generate a comprehensive insight into GC and to further investigate the question of how to assess a student's GC development for the purpose of finding links between GC and study abroad, the following part of the literature review provides a considerable account of each approach.

#### a) Neoliberal approach

A neoliberal global citizen is educated to be successful in a capitalist society that values individualism, productivity, competition and prosperity. Underpinning global citizenship for a global economy is the belief that we are now living in a knowledge economy, in which information is presented as universal capital in a worldwide flow of money and ideas (Bhagwati, 2004). Concern about competition for jobs and resources in this economy is coupled with the normative claim of neoliberalism that, “human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2).

Rizvi (2007) finds that most courses and programmes relating to GC development in universities aim to prepare students for the global economy by increasing students’ job skills and providing competitive advantages. This type of GC development programme is often viewed as a knowledge-based and service-oriented approach taking place in internationalised institutions. Education aiming to cultivate neoliberal GC focuses on developing students’ international commercial awareness and global competencies. Thus, students are expected to have higher mobility and employability to achieve their values and compete in the global job market. Shultz (2007) points out that GC based on neoliberal approaches tend to define a global citizen as someone who can participate in the global economy through strengthened transnational mobility.

Given the importance placed on the internationalisation of higher education as an economic imperative (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008), it is perhaps not surprising that global citizenship is often framed as a means for university students to develop economic acuity. As Tarrant (2010) argued most universities acknowledge that the future workforce depends on a human resource that is sensitive to and aware of global commerce. Rhoads and Szelényi (2011) add that increasingly dominant neoliberal concept of citizenship also promote a kind of global citizenship known as capitalism, which is a mainly corporatized, market-centric way to ensure that students are appealing to employers and a country's economic growth continues. As a result, building intercultural competency, learning another language, or studying abroad is viewed in light of neoliberalism as a strategic means of generating human capital for today's university students in the global knowledge economy.

## b) Cosmopolitan approach

While neoliberal GC is essential in a competitive employment market, a cosmopolitan lens offers the capabilities of a broader mindset and insight to educational approaches for personal intellectual achievement. Cosmopolitanism as it is received today is a concept which has several meanings. In the lens of cosmopolitan GC, Nussbaum (1996, p.9) believes that “all human beings are part of the global community of dialogue and given the circle that defines humanity special attention and respect”. Extending that conception, Appiah (2006) stressed that while we should seek to come to an understanding that we share a common humanity, we must also recognise the legitimacy of differences – both among people and among different cultures. Heater (1996) goes so far as to envision a world order, or even a global or super-national government, based upon cosmopolitan norms. Dower (2003) defines the normative claim as drawing upon the duties and responsibilities of a global citizen who accepts in varying degrees of engagement as an active global citizen in exercising responsibility or asserting universal rights towards human beings in general. Rights, duties, morals, virtues, ethics, and competencies transported from a local, regional, and national reality onto the international arena are used by scholars to define cosmopolitan GC. These features are universal, transcending all borders, races, faiths, and civilizations.

GC in the lenses of cosmopolitanism is beyond the realm of intercultural competency and international employability, that students must be taught to recognise similarity and difference; appreciate the increasing inter-dependencies brought about by greater global interconnectivity; acknowledge they have a moral obligation to both national and international communities; and think beyond the confines of their own national boundaries and learn to engage in the culture of dialogue (Nussbaum, 2002). Resonated with Nussbaum’s notion, some scholars believe GC construct to be complex and multi-level, grounded in moral and cosmopolitan values (Stewart, 2008). Through this lens, Lilley (2014) interpret global citizenship as a mind-set or attitude of awareness, caring, and embracing cultural diversity while promoting social justice and sustainability, coupled with a sense of responsibility to act. In the same vein, Massaro

(2022) assumes a global citizen should have specific dispositions, including pro-social values, valuing diversity, equitable treatment of one another, moral reasoning, intercultural communication skills, concern for the environment, social responsibility, global awareness and active engagement. In other words, according to Appiah (2007), cosmopolitanglobal citizens respect and value diversity, participate on various community levels from local to global, take responsibility for their actions, and care for the fate of human beings across societies.

The rise of interests and concerns surrounding the cosmopolitan type of GC has contributed to the founding of global organisations such as the United Nations, Oxfam, and UNESCO, among many others that seek to ensure access to basic human needs and rights and foster an egalitarian ideal of global justice (Davies, 2006). GC has increased its attention to universal human rights and growing global-minded activism and grassroots protest. Advances in technology and increased levels of travel and migration have put GC in a sense of global interconnectedness and responsibility for a host of problems, from the environment down to the sustainable development of every nation. Meanwhile, UNESCO (2015) advocate cosmopolitan GC as an idea about “multiple levels of identity, and the potential for a collective identity that transcends individual cultural, religious, ethnic or other differences”. In a sense, GC is a means of creating an inclusive world whereby we, as global citizens, make choices in the political, economic and social spheres that take into account broader global realities.

### c) Critical approach

In the lens of critical GC, globalisation is “cultural, social, environmental, and political as well as economic, resulting in new patterns of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the erosion of North-South hierarchies” (Shultz, 2009, p. 247). As a wide array of literature on GC is written by Western scholars, the very assertion of a global ethic, universal values, norms and what is deemed a ‘global’ problem tend to deepen the demarcation between the north and south. Shultz (2007) interprets globalisation as more than a new form of imperialism of the only path to a single global economy. Without a critical view on GC, cosmopolitanism and globalisation would become a

process of denying communities and local cultures from the South for the sake of proliferating the values of the West upon the rest of the world. Andreotti (2006) states that critical GC considers the underlying problem to be one of “inequality and injustice,” stemming from a series of “complex structures, systems, assumptions, power relations and attitudes that create and maintain exploitation and enforced disempowerment and tend to eliminate difference” (Andreotti, 2006, p. 46). In the perspective of critical GC, North and South are no longer disconnected. Critical global citizens seek ways to understand the complexity of global power dynamics, adopt their own place in the global economic marketplace and work towards the social justice agenda.

Bourn (2005) addresses that a critical global citizen is a well-informed and engaged citizen who understands what globalisation means, has the ability to understand and engage with global challenges, such as climate change and poverty, develops skills to understand and respect a range of cultures and values, and has the ability to reflect critically upon one’s own values base. In other words, critical GC has a clear focus on self-reflection, awareness, and action, which are all necessary for challenging global power structures. Shultz’s (2009) view agrees that a global citizen should recognise him or herself as intricately connected to people and issues that cross national boundaries. Thus, critical GC is a learning process that recognises diverse ideas and ways of viewing the world, as well as engaging with issues and challenges through various lenses.

There is no “one size fits all” for developing global citizenship. GC education in different approaches can lead to very different types of global citizens. For instance, the neoliberal type of GC development might shape students into productive and competitive employees; cosmopolitan GC development might lead students to become social activists; Critical pedagogy might enable students to reflect on the world’s system. At the same time, GC development is a complex process in which an individual is influenced by interacting variables. Viewing GC from these three lenses, the research finds that GC involves both a mindset to understand globalisation and a skillset to take action. This research project will investigate students’ GC from both a value and skills approach. After exploring the different forms of mindsets and values on GC, the following section aims to identify what essential skills students need to act as global citizens.



### **3.1.4. Key skills for global citizenship**

In the field of GC and international education, the concepts of global competence, global skills and intercultural competence are closely intertwined (Appiah, 1996; Rader, 2015). It is apparent that consensus has not yet been reached among educators on how these themes are related to each other (Massaro (2022). Most scholars agree that global competence as a broad term indicates sets of skills to compete in the global marketplace while emphasising a sophisticated understanding of global systems and cultures (Green, 2012). In contrast, intercultural competence was frequently associated with experiences of other cultures and countries as well as the use of other languages, typically English, for intercultural communication (Baker & Fang, 2019). One of the most widely used definitions of intercultural competence is "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2006, p.247). It also refers to skills that help people understand the world of diversity and integrate across disciplinary domains to comprehend global events (Reimers, 2009). It is commonly agreed that Intercultural skills are at the heart of global competency and enable students to be informed, compassionate and engaged global citizens (Rader, 2018).

Developing global competence has become a shared goal and priority of global organisations and educational institutions interested in expanding young people's understanding, skills and values to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges in the 21st century (Bourn, 2018). However, what key skills should be included for GC development in higher education have been both fragmentary and heavily debated (Aktas, Pitts, Richards & Silova, 2016). In the field of international education and GC, there has been an increase in new specializations in education such as education for peace, global outlook, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, human rights and sustainable development. Despite the diversity of their themes, the skills developed within these separate fields are similar and even, in some cases, identical (Akkari & Maleq, 2019). The many overlaps require us to reflect on a coherent framework that explores the linkage between them.

Schattle (2008) identified the primary contents of skills of GC as awareness, responsibility, and participation. The secondary components of GC, as Schattle (2008) identified, are cross-cultural empathy, personal achievement, and international mobility. Nussbaum (2002) argues that global citizens need three abilities: 1) critical awareness of their own tradition and the ability to undertake a discussion that contains mutual respect for a reason; 2) the ability to think as a citizen of the whole world, rather than some fraction of this whole; 3) empathy, which she calls “the narrative imagination”, an ability to see the world as others see it. As such, well-known scholars in the field of GC tend to associate global citizen’s skills with several capacities of intercultural awareness and empathy which include: the ability to reflect on oneself and the world, to think through different perspectives and to value, respect and relate to otherness. Arguably, these types of skills are rather abstract and difficult to be evaluated within educational programmes.

Among the debates on global skills, Bill Hunter has provided a widely used definition in his Global Competency Model as “having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside one’s environment” (Hunter, 2004, p. 130-131). In other words, a global citizen must be able to identify cultural differences to compete globally, collaborate across cultures, and effectively participate in both social and business settings in other countries. According to Hunter, White and Godbey (2006), key global skills must include: 1) The most important step in becoming globally competent is to get a thorough grasp of one's own cultural norms and values. Before stepping into someone else's cultural box, a person should try to understand his or her own; 2) the discovery and exploration of cultural, social, and linguistic diversity with developing a non - judgmental and open attitude toward difference; and 3) a firm understanding of the concept of globalisation and world affairs. The awareness of the interdependence of culture, politics, history, society, economics, the environment, and other relevant themes becomes critical at this point. It is important to enhance intercultural experiences and push for direct experiences with people from other cultures.

The rising popularity of different themes on global skills can be seen predominantly in OECD countries, which emphasise the importance of cultivating transferable skills in

a knowledge economy. According to Bourn (2018), the terms of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, global competencies, global skills and skills to be a global citizen are used interchangeably in the international policy initiatives of bodies. Over the past five years, global institutions such as Oxfam, the World Bank, the OECD and UNESCO have produced widely accepted frameworks for the interpretation of global skills. Oxfam (2016) outlines the following global skills: critical and creative thinking, empathy, self-awareness and reflection, communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution, ability to manage complexity and uncertainty, and informed and reflective action in their Global Citizenship Educational Framework. In a simple sense, global skills may be characterised as the ability and disposition to comprehend and act on global challenges. The OECD frames global competence as:

It is a multidimensional capacity. Globally competent individuals can examine local, global and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate different perspectives and world views, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being (OECD, 2018, p.4)

Based on the OECD's framework of global competency, Mansilla and Wilson (2020) investigated how these skills asserted by Western organisations are relevant to China's youth generation. They proposed a set of four cognitive and moral global skills needed specifically in China's context "as a cultivation of self and search to understand and improve the world" (Mansilla & Wilson, 2020, p.3). These four skills, also named 'virtuous dispositions', include: devoting to comprehending the world within and beyond our direct surroundings, attempting to recognise viewpoints and relate to people with empathy, interacting across differences while communicating mindfully, and taking action with others to help develop better local and global communities (Mansilla & Wilson, 2020). In this sense, cultivating global skills for Chinese students is deemed as a life-long practice of developing moral characters, improving cognitive capacity and increasing participation via everyday contact with the outside world.

Bourn (2018) points out that these frameworks are important for their "inclusion of informed action demonstrates the linkages to broader discourses around citizenship" and "considerable influence on global educational practice" (p. 5). However, these mainstream frameworks of global competency are aimed mainly at school curriculums

and assessments for school children, rather than for university students and professionals (Bourn, 2018). In other words, there is little consensus on the theoretical basis of the construct of global skills in higher education or what it means practically, organisationally, and pedagogically. Bourn (2018) emphasises that global skills used to be associated with the ability and competence to tackle tasks related to activities within employment, but it is increasingly becoming related to social capabilities of empathy, making sense of the world, cooperating and respecting others and understanding the forces of globalisation. In other words, global skills include not only the technical and professional skills at the workplace, but also broader cultural competency, social skills and a global outlook. At the same time, Bourn (2018) advocates a need to move away from arguments that are about global skills to effectively engage today's university students within the context of globalisation beyond abstract ideas. Based on his theoretical perspective of global citizenship and development education, Bourn (2018) proposed a distinctive framework of global skills presented in the book *Understanding Global Skills for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Professions*. This framework includes seven interrelated sets of global skills:

- 1) Ability to see the connections between what is happening in your own community and in the communities of people elsewhere in the world;
- 2) Recognition of what it means to live and work in a global society, and of the value of having a broad global outlook which respects, listens to and values perspectives other than one's own;
- 3) Ability to understand the impact of global forces on one's life and the lives of other people, and what this means in terms of a sense of place in the world;
- 4) Understanding of the value of ICT and how best to use it, in a way that is self-reflective and critical, that questions data and information;
- 5) Openness to a continued process of self-reflection, critical dialogue and questioning of one's assumptions about the world;
- 6) Ability to work with others who may have different viewpoints and perspectives, being prepared to change one's opinions as a result of working with others, and seeking cooperative and participatory ways of working;
- 7) Confidence, belief and willingness to seek a more just and sustainable world (Bourn, 2018, p. 125).

This skillset covers well cognitive skills such as critical, systematic, and creative thinking to approach global issues from different angles and multiple perspectives, social skills such as intercultural communication, conflict resolution and cooperation, and emotional skills such as aptitudes for inclusiveness and a sense of empathy.

Bourn divides these skills into three categories for the global economy, for intercultural engagement and for making sense of a globalised society. The skills within this framework are transferable and widely applicable to adults regardless of nationality and occupation. All of these skills are highly relevant to university students' need of personal and professional development in the globalised world. As such, this framework provides a set of initial themes to explore Chinese international students' GC development in my research.

### **3.1.5. The Global Citizen Model**

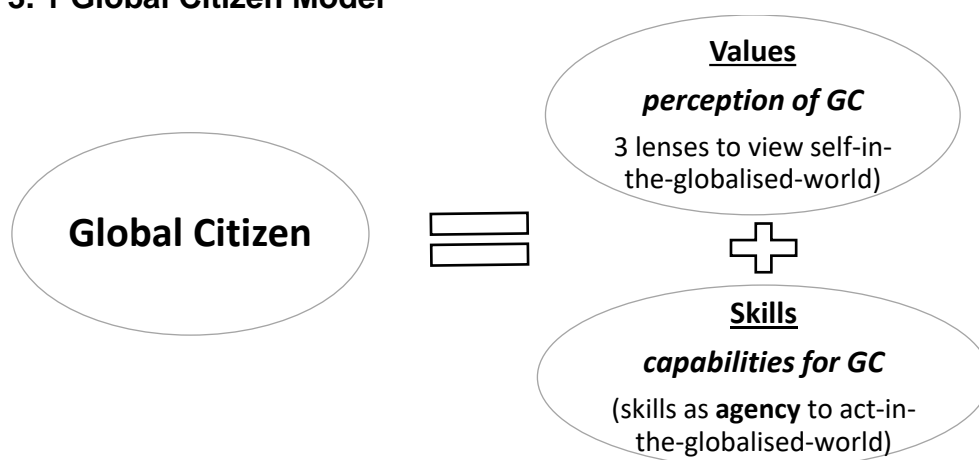
This research study is located within the context of the substantial growth of Chinese international students enrolling into UK universities; the increasing emphasis on cultivating global citizens in the UK's universities; and the development of China calling for university graduates with a global outlook. Therefore, the conceptual framework of this research must be able to examine the extent to which Chinese international students are developed as global citizens. The construction of this framework involves a process of: 1) exploring the literature to describe various interpretations on the concept of GC and global skills; 2) identifying themes and patterns within the interpretations; 3) investigating the context and condition of the research subjects as Chinese international students to select appropriate GC elements/themes and structures to include in the framework; 4) establishing a model/framework to illustrate these themes; 5) seeking feedback in order to make revisions to the framework where appropriate.

As becoming global citizens involves students' changing perceptions on their global identity and acquiring global skills for their global engagement (Bourn, 2018), the research explores GC through both a values-based and a skills-based approach. The research starts with a values-based approach to understand students' perceptions of themselves as global citizens and their perspectives on GC. To analyse students' perceptions and perspectives of GC, the study interprets students' views through three lenses (neoliberal, cosmopolitan, critical pedagogical) and provides an insightful understanding of the ways in which GC is manifested in students' living experiences.

After mapping out students' perspectives on GC, the research applies a skill-based approach through in-depth interviews to explore students' global skills development during their learning experiences. The study applies a seven dimensions/themes GC assessment framework based on Bourn's (2018) "A New Framework for Global Skills" as outlined in Understanding Global Skills for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Professions. The seven-dimensional framework includes key elements of GC as global identity and awareness, global values and outlook, global knowledge and understanding, global digital literacy and information evaluation, global critical learning and reflection, global collaboration and networking, and global responsibility and engagement. These seven dimensions of GC development are explored with considerable detail in the literature review and will be assessed separately through semi-structured interviews.

In the research conceptual framework, I build up a model of a global citizen formed by two dimensions: the perception of one's identity and the world in terms of global citizenship and a set of skills to act as a global citizen.

**Figure 3. 1 Global Citizen Model**



The framework aims to identify key elements within GC and global skills, and thus to enable a general assessment of international students' GC development during their study abroad. According to Bourn (2018), there are seven themes/elements relevant to assess students' GC development and global skills. Bourn's framework reflects GC from the three lenses, including the conditions of a critical global citizen and covers key elements for global citizenship. As this framework is comprehensive, specific and assessable, the research project will apply this framework as an indicator to explore

the impact of studying abroad experiences on students' GC. Along with a value-based dimension as perspectives of GC, the Model of Global Citizen also examines the skill-based dimension on seven elements as 1) global identity and awareness; 2) global value and outlook; 3) global knowledge and understanding; 4) global digital literacy and information evaluation; 5) global critical learning and reflection; 6) global collaboration and networking; 7) global responsibility and engagement (Bourn, 2018). To better analyse Chinese international students' different dimensions on GC, I propose a proposition model of Chinese students from a review the of literature on Chinese university students' patterns of values, capability and behaviours.

**Table 3. 1 Themes of Global Citizenship Relevant to Chinese Students**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Model of Global Citizen</b>	<b>Proposition of Chinese students</b>
Global Citizenship perspectives	neoliberal	Increasing tension on the personal achievement and consumerism in the globalised world.
	cosmopolitan	General appreciation on cultural diversity and value harmony in any community.
	critical	Lack of critical thinking style. Understand the power relationship and inequality
Global identity and awareness	An ability to see the connections between what is happening in your own community and in the communities of people elsewhere in the world	Deeply attached to their own communities. Receive news on other areas in the world from China's mainstream media.
Global value and outlook	Recognition of what it means to live and work in a global	Eager to explore different countries mainly through tourism,

	society and of the value of having a broad global outlook that respects, listens to and values perspectives other than one's own.	but lack of understanding and experience on various culture.
Global knowledge and understanding	An ability to understand the impact of global forces on one's life and the lives of other people, and what this means in terms of a sense of place in the world.	Focus narrowly on the impact of global forces in China. The knowledge of international relationship is centred on China and certain western countries.
Global digital literacy and information reflection	Understanding of the value of ICT and how best to use it, in a way that is self-reflective and critical, that questions data and information.	Good IT skills and only interact online with Chinese speakers. Increasing sense of critically reviewing information. Heavily rely on WeChat.
Global critical learning	Openness to a continuous process of self-reflection, critical dialogue and questioning of one's own assumptions about the world.	Not used to self-reflection and critical thinking.
Global collaboration and networking	Ability to work with others who may have different viewpoints and perspectives, being prepared to change one's opinions as a result of working with others and seeking cooperative and participatory ways of working.	Friendly and respectful when working with others, but not proactive in networking.



Global responsibility and engagement	Confidence, belief and willingness to seek a more just and sustainable world	Pursue a peaceful world and harmonious environment, but more concerned about employability and not willing to take risk.
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The study aims to identify key elements within GC and global skills, and thus to enable a general evaluation of international students' GC development during their study abroad. According to Bourn (2018), there are seven themes/elements relevant to students' GC development and global skills. Bourn's framework reflects GC from the three lenses, including the conditions of a critical global citizen and covers key elements for global citizenship. As the framework is comprehensive, specific and assessable, the research project will apply this framework as an indicator to explore the effect of studying abroad during the interviews of this study.

### **3.2. Theoretical framework: study abroad as transformative learning for global citizenship**

#### **3.2.1 The theory of transformative learning**

Transformative learning theory (TLT) is viewed to be fundamental in research on students' experiences and personal development in international higher education (Taylor, 1994; Tran, 2012; Blake-Campbell, 2014). It is underpinned on the Transformative Theory developed by Jack Mezirow in 1991. Since then, TLT has evolved "into a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construct, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience" (Cranton, 1994, p.22). As TLT assumes that learning can foster change or facilitate a transformation in individuals' perspectives and competencies (Taylor, 2008), this theory has a close link to the explanation of international students' journey of becoming global citizens through study abroad experience. Because at the heart of TLT is the process of constructing new values and worldviews based on direct experiences of being placed

in uncomfortable situations and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991), study abroad experience can potentially facilitate students' global citizenship development. TLT is therefore served as a theoretical framework in this study and is applied at various stages including when framing the research questions, designing interview guidance and interpreting the qualitative data.

Transformative learning is a shifting process in which learners reassess their previous assumptions and move toward significant changes in values and attitudes in order to build meaning and construct reality (Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 1994). Mezirow (2000, p7) defines transformative learning as a process by which individuals transform their taken-for-granted "frames of reference" (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mindsets) to be more "inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective" to promote autonomous and responsible lifelong thinking patterns, empowerment, and a sense of community. There are 10 steps to achieve transformation in learning: (1) Confronting a disorienting dilemma; (2) Self-examination with frustrating feelings; (3) Critically assessing one's assumptions; (4) Sharing discontent with others; (5) Exploring options for new perspective; (6) Planning a course of action; (7) Acquiring new knowledge and skills for implement; (8) Provisionally attempting a new frame of mind; (9) Building competence and confidence in new ideas; (10) Fully reintegrate into life based on conditions dictated by one's new perspective (Mezirow, 1991). However, Mezirow also mentions that learners do not have to go through all the above experiences for transformative learning to occur in some situations.

Through explaining the 10 steps above, Mezirow (2000) emphasises that transformative learning is started when a change occurs to one's frame of reference, which is caused by an event or experience and followed by a subsequent change in action. Mezirow and Taylor (2001) advocate that at the centre of the transformative process is learners' critical reflection on their own perspectives and experiences. This "critical reflection," according to Cranton (2002, p.64), refers to learners' ability to critically analyse their own current beliefs, be willing to recognise alternatives, and change how they make sense of the world. Klein and Wikan (2019) added that experience becomes educative only when it is combined with learners' critical analysis, reflection and interpretation. Indeed, TLT involves a change in thinking from an

emphasis on concrete facts to the abstract: a change from “what we know” to “how we know” (Dirkx et al, 2006). In order to address the underlying meanings in the construction of knowledge, such an epistemological change involves thinking about broad, thematic concerns as well as the political settings of issues (King, 2003). After discovering the underlying assumption, learners are freed from uncritical acceptance of others’ purposes, values, and beliefs (Taylor, 2008). Transformational learning is thereby cultivated and nurtured through a process of reflective thinking to generate new frames of reference and worldviews.

The essential process of TLT is a “perspective transformation” in which learners change their “meaning schemes” including specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions (Mezirow, 1991, p.167). A transformation in one’s perception results in a new understanding of oneself and relationship with others, which in turn leads to changes in how one views the world (Mezirow, 2000). Similarly, Clark (1992) views perspective transformation as involving: the understanding of self; our belief systems; and our behaviours. Mezirow also notes that there are three dimensions in perspective transformation: psychological (changes in self-concept and worldview), conventional (revision of belief systems), and behavioural (changes in habit and lifestyle). The ability to change the three dimensions of one’s perspective leads to the development of global competencies such as analytical problem solving, inter-culture communication, teamwork and global understanding (Tran, 2012). TLT is thereby recognised by a large number of scholars (e.g. Tarrant, 2009; Blake-Campbell, 2014) as a paradigm shift learning which produces significant long-term impacts and induces more far-reaching change in learners than other kinds of learning.

### **3.2.2. Transformative learning through study abroad**

The very essence of study abroad requires international travel and exploring new cultures that can foster transformative learning when integrated with optimised educational programmes. (Strange & Gibson, 2017). Mezirow and Taylor (2011) discuss useful aspects related to TLT that can be applied in the context of international students’ changes in personal and professional attitudes and outlooks. Taylor (2008)

suggests that students' worldviews become more comprehensive, differentiating, permeable, critically insightful and integrative of reality as they experience a transformation in perspective. In other words, when students experience a perspective transformation, their values and attitudes toward others and the outside worlds become more open, reflective and inclusive. Erichsen (2011, p. 110) claims that TLT within an international context is about "integration and finding connection" (adaptation and perspectival shift), but also about "differentiation and reinventing" oneself within a new context (identity development). When applied to study abroad programmes, an overarching goal of TLT is to empower students to move from perspectives of ethnocentrism and dualistic epistemologies to a new frame of reference that promotes cultural pluralism (Klein & Wikan, 2019). Indeed, the experience of studying abroad engenders deeply reflective learning and influences shifting perspectives of oneself and others.

The experience of studying abroad is a "delivery mechanism" for a transformational learning process in which new values and meanings are shaped (Tarrant, 2009, p. 442). Mezirow (1991) promotes the use of experience in education as the "delivery mechanism" to challenge students' assumptions and make them aware of how and why these assumptions constrain the way they perceive the world. Study abroad is such an "educative experience" which takes students out of their comfort zone and could lead to the "uncomfortable situation" described by Mezirow. In an uncomfortable situation or at an unfamiliar place, students' worldviews and habitual expectations can be disrupted and challenged, so that a more inclusive, discriminating and integrative perspective may emerge (Morgan, 2010). Blake-Campbell (2014) asserts that when students are placed in a challenging situations during their study abroad, through self-reflection, active learning and effective action they can develop awareness of the world and themselves, leading to a long-lasting change to their frames of reference and perspectives. Indeed, the challenging experiences that international students go through are closely linked to opportunities for self-transformation and conditions for significant personal growth (Tran, 2012). Accordingly, transformative learning can only be achieved when the experiences of studying abroad are structured to challenge students' perceptions of themselves and the world.

There are many research studies that have reported on transformative learning occurring through international education and students themselves seem to value the long-term benefits of transformative learning offered by an experience abroad (Paige et al, 2009). Brown (2009) states that study abroad programmes can represent the catalyst for self-discovery and self-reconstruction, thus international students are equipped with transformative power. Tran (2012) finds that students' aspiration to transform their own perspectives and enrich their international experiences is the primary motive for international students to undertake an international education. This finding is echoed by Blake-Campbell (2014), who states that one of international students' primary purposes in living abroad is to transform themselves and develop multiple frames to make sense of the world rather than conforming to the fixed set of cultural conventions of their home countries. However, Klein and Wikan (2019) argue that to date most of the related studies were conducted by educators with a personal interest in communicating the success of the programmes they had managed. This might have impeded critical judgements about the outputs and values of the education abroad programmes.

While TLT is a possible explanation for the changes international students make in their journey, there are rising concerns about what actual transformations happen during studying abroad. Firstly, not all study abroad experiences are educative and inspiring. Without effective critical self-reflection and openness to diversity, experience abroad can solidify students' already-held assumptions and confirm their existing social-cultural beliefs (Blake-Campbell, 2014). Secondly, the increased access to information technology and social media can prevent students from fully engaging in foreign cultures (Erichsen, 2011). Thirdly, postcolonial inspired critiques indicate that education abroad programmes foster neoliberal attitudes and can be seen as a part of "Western imperialistic endeavours" (Sharpe 2015, p. 228). In addition, Klein and Wikan (2019) question whether students who have only lived outside borders for a short period can grasp the imbalances and power interconnection that exist in North-South relations. Finally, Tran (2012) points out that because the process of transformative learning requires strong self-determination and an effective strategy, it takes place only when international students are able to adapt to an unfamiliar learning and social environment through exercising their personal agency in specific ways.

### **3.3.3. Transformative learning for global citizenship**

The link between TLT and GC development is based on the widely accepted view that confronting other cultures worldwide is the initial step for cultivating GC (Schattle, 2008). Several authors (e.g. Killick, 2011; Blake-Campbell, 2014) find that first-hand knowledge of other cultures is fundamental for perspective transformation, leading to global awareness and intercultural sensitivity. This is likely to be obtained by experiences of “otherness” and “culture shock” in an international context (Brown, 2009, p. 506). Sharpe (2015, p. 227) notes that transformative learning in a global context has gained prominence as one of the main pedagogical strategies for GC development, because the direct experience of “being exposed to ‘otherness’ when living outside one’s own national borders differs from the traditional classroom approach”. Indeed, the interactions with others at different environments tests one’s perceptions of oneself and others. This, in turn, leans on the TLT (Mezirow, 1991), which describes the process of transformative learning taking place when learners share others’ viewpoints and change their own perspectives accordingly. Furthermore, Klein and Wikan (2019, p. 94) view contact with “international others” as one way to lessen “nationalistic attitudes” while at the same time increasing global awareness.

It is worth mentioning that confronting different cultures is just an initial step to gain GC and students must make their own efforts to engage with the “international others”. Indeed, Jooste and Heleta (2017, p.40) claim that GC development is about “going beyond our comfort zone”, including the acceptance of foreign customs. They add that one of the features of global citizens is the willingness to “seek common understanding when language is a barrier.” Moreover, Freire (1993) sees transformative learners being empowered to become agents of change in their own lives and in the transformation of society. International students' transformation into global citizens, according to Tran (2012), is a complex interaction of difficulties and transformational power. Institutions attempt to portray themselves as places where changes occur, but in reality, it appears that international students bear the adaptation and intercultural transformation by themselves.

### **3.3. A Critical Review on Study abroad and Global Citizenship**

Many scholars view studying and living experiences in other countries as pivotal steps for students to rebuild their identity and gain skills for personal growth, professional development, employment, social activism and self-reflection. Schattle (2008) finds that travelling abroad to participate in education programmes is the most effective way for university students to move towards becoming global citizens. Indeed, study abroad has been identified as a constructive engagement to develop global citizenship and global skills. Rizvi (2007) also notices that international mobility has provided universities with space to cultivate global citizenship in such a way that students have the opportunity to develop the skills needed to serve in a highly interconnected global society.

#### **3.3.1. Study abroad for global citizenship**

Gaining a global citizen identity is becoming an increasingly common determinant of the demand for opportunities to study abroad. For decades, universities have been operating study abroad programmes with the assumption that simply by living and studying in another country, students could naturally gain intercultural skills, deepen their self-awareness and develop empathy for the injustices in the world (Shultz, 2012). GC development has become a guaranteed outcome of study abroad:

This idea hinges on the basic argument that participating in study abroad offers a life-changing experience and broadens students' horizons in various ways. Eventually, regardless of whether one studies abroad for a few short weeks or longer or spends time in a familiar western context or in a less traditional setting, the idea holds that the student will acquire the recognized professional and intellectual credential of GC (Streitwieser & Light, 2016, p.67).

However, this deep transformative learning does not happen automatically for many international students (Lilley et al. 2015). Moreover, the meaning of GC is not clearly defined by study abroad providers and not commonly understood by international students (Bourn, 2009). The existing ambiguity of interpretations of GC and a lack of shared data on international students' learning outcomes make the links between study abroad and GC more complicated and uncertain.

Although cultivating global citizens appears to be a widely recognised goal of international mobility, there is plenty of scepticism about applying the GC concept in educational research (Massaro, 2022). In the first divide, some scholars view study abroad for GC as referring to a series of activities closely associated with institutional prestige, profile, and revenue (Green, 2012). These activities are generally quantifiable, lending to institutional comparisons and benchmarking, and provide metrics for internationalisation performance that resonate with neoliberalism and deepen inequality. Secondly, the idea of developing students' moral compasses can raise questions about whose values and morals and how institutions undertake this delicate task (Hunter, 2016). Some students will choose not to accept responsibility for the fate of others far away or may see inequality as an irremediable fact of life (Green, 2012). Thirdly, some people are opposed to GC and internationalisation because they assume global education will weaken the nation's role and diminish local culture while bringing about a global governance system (Ashwill, 2021).

For this research, it is vital to understand how students learn and develop as global citizens in study abroad programmes. With an increasing number of students studying abroad for GC, there are some scholars (e.g, Streitwieser & Light, 2016; Bourn, 2020) seeking explanation as to how GC acquisition takes place and what specific global competencies can be associated with international mobility. To discover the potential impacts of international mobility on GC development, this part analyses existing studies and findings through the three lenses (neoliberal, cosmopolitan and critical) discussed in the previous session as the “conceptual framework” of this research.

a) Neoliberal possibility

The neoliberal possibility of study abroad emphasises the economic criteria of educating graduates with the skills required to compete effectively in the global employment market (Bourn, 2020). There is strong evidence that an international experience contributes to graduate employability and intercultural capability in the workplace (Schweisfurth & Gu 2009). International study experience and global skills have always been viewed as “curricular necessities for the global-ready graduate seeking employment with transnational corporations and international development organizations, and for a potential placement abroad” (Hunter et al, 2006, p.278).



Indeed, global competence gained through international education can boost employability and enable younger people to thrive in a changing labour market. The British Council (2013) states that work readiness in an interconnected world requires young people to go abroad in order to understand the complex dynamics of globalisation, be open to people from different cultural backgrounds and build trust for cooperation in diverse teams. Similarly, the OECD (2018, p. 5) claims that “effective communication and appropriate behaviour within diverse teams are keys to success” in the globalised world, and “employers increasingly seek to attract learners who easily adapt to new contexts”. Studying abroad thereby is an effective approach to increase international students’ employability and competitiveness globally.

Indeed, the motivation to promote study abroad for GC is often related to marketing a university as an institution that prepares students for the globally competitive workforce instead of marketing for social justice and authentic intercultural learning (Cameron, 2014). In contrast, some scholars (e.g. King, 2002; Tran, 2012) argue that students’ choice of study abroad and becoming global citizens are not closely linked to traditional economic factors, but more to a mixture of educational, leisure, travel and experiential benefits. Accordingly, Chang (2016) finds that improving employability and professional development is not the main goal for international mobility and GC development, while the top three goals are: taking advantage of traveling overseas, improving language skills and exploring a new culture.

#### b) Cosmopolitan possibility

The cosmopolitan possibility of study abroad emphasises the need for young people to cultivate greater understanding and appreciation of difference (Blum & Bourn, 2019). Study abroad programmes are considered to be effective ways of cultivating global awareness and building intercultural competences. While the driving force for promoting GC through international education continues to focus on improving employability, the social responsibility agenda is gaining momentum in many universities (Schattle, 2009). It has been argued that international mobility may give rise to largely instrumental conceptions of global citizenship that are disconnected from principles of education as public good with little consideration global social justice (Rizvi, 2005). However, Blake-Campbell (2014, p.61) finds that study abroad is the

best approach to cultivate “intercultural competence” which is necessary to understand the interrelationships between cultures, community, and commerce as well as to negotiate across borders and explore “sustainable solutions” for the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s global economy and society. Furthermore, as Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) suggest, the presence of international students creates potential for universities to facilitate intercultural experiences and cultivate a cosmopolitan atmosphere which encompasses both domestic and international contexts. In such cosmopolitan university campuses, both home and international students can develop their intercultural communication skills and deepen their global understanding.

c) Critical reflection possibility

On one hand, study abroad experiences can enhance students’ critical thinking and understanding of their own place in the world as well as that of other people. Greatrex-White (2008) shows that study abroad has the potential for students to extend their capacity for critical culture awareness – not only an awareness of the host culture but also an awareness of their own culture:

Having become a foreigner in the host country, there remained a sense of being tied to the home culture; moving back and forth like an object caught on the edge of a wave – neither in the sea nor on the beach. The host culture might be seen but not always understood, whilst the home culture, previously invisible and taken for granted, suddenly becomes very visible (Greatrex-White, 2008, p. 535)

An increasing critical awareness on students themselves and others transforms students into to global citizens who are makers of difference, effectors of personal change and facilitators of global progress (Ninnes & Hellstein, 2005). Indeed, physical exposure to foreign cultures and people can reduce ethnocentric attitudes and increase critical reflection on students’ own identity (Killick, 2012). In addition, Szelenyi and Rhoads (2007) argue that by offering opportunities to encounter new people with different viewpoints and cultural norms, study abroad programmes can develop critical global citizens who not only reconsider their own cultures and national affiliations, but also take on their responsibilities to change the world.

On the other hand, the critical insights gained from international mobility can make students realise the deeply embedded structures and ongoing inequality in the globalised world. The critical reflection possibility thereby “advocates for more equitable distribution of resources, cognitive justice, and more horizontal forms of governance, and aspires to radical transformation of existing structures, up to and including their dismantling” (Stein, 2015, p. 246). However, Larsen (2014, p. 2) suggests that education abroad can have the potential to “maintain binaries such as developed–underdeveloped, rich–poor, democratic–undemocratic, and modern–traditional”, and thus maintain and even strengthen colonial power relations under the umbrella of global learning.

### 3.3.2. Current literature on study abroad and GC

A review of previous research literature focused on study abroad reveals a significant consensus that such experiences offer possibilities for profound personal change, but only a few studies have investigated whether such experiences contribute specifically to GC development. In order to understand the major discussions and findings in the existing body of knowledge on the relationship between study abroad and GC, 11 major works have been identified as closely related to my research project. The scholars of these research projects are from Western and Eastern countries and focus on international students from all over the world, and can thus provide a comprehensive review of GC development for a diverse set of students.

**Table 3. 2 Key Literature on GC and Study Abroad**

Author s (Date)	Purpose	Research Design	Conceptual Framework  of GC	Findings
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<p>Michael Paige et al. (2009)</p>	<p>To explore the ways in which participants in U.S. higher education study abroad programmes have become globally engaged during their lives since their overseas sojourns</p>	<p>Mixed methods: surveyed 6,391 and interviewed 63 graduates from 22 USA colleges who had studied abroad in the past five decades  (A retrospective tracer study)</p>	<p>Global engagement, as conceptualised by the SAGE project, is expressed by civic commitments in domestic and international arenas; knowledge production of print, artistic, online, and digital media; philanthropy in terms of volunteer time and monetary donations; social entrepreneurship, meaning involvement in organisations whose purpose and/or profits are to benefit the community, and the practice of voluntary simplicity in one's lifestyle.</p>	<p>Study abroad was viewed as the most impactful of students' undergraduate experiences and should be welcomed by international educators.  Study abroad has had a profound impact on five dimensions of global engagement (civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and voluntary simplicity) as well as on subsequent educational and career choices.</p>
<p>Sicong Chen. (2011).</p>	<p>To explore possible ways of developing global citizenship through studying abroad and investigating the perceptions of Chinese students study in a UK university</p>	<p>Qualitative:  The two-stage research method of combining questionnaire and in-depth interview on five Chinese postgraduate students of social science at York University.</p>	<p>Oxfam's framework (2006), including the conditions of a typical global citizen and key elements for responsible global citizenship (knowledge, skill, value)</p>	<p>Chinese students have a particular understanding of global citizenship and do not commonly accept the global citizen identity. Studying abroad is deemed to have a positive effect on the development of some elements of global citizenship but a comprehensive sense of global citizenship seems not to be developed explicitly as a result of studying abroad.</p>
<p>David Killick (2012)</p>	<p>To explore the lived-experiences of British students'</p>	<p>Qualitative:  In-depth interview (pre-,</p>	<p>A framework of global citizenship self- and act-in-the-world attributes. Global</p>	<p>The study revealed the importance of different significant others and of communities of</p>

	<p>journey of becoming global citizens through participation in study abroad programmes.</p>	<p>mid-, and post-experience) of 14 undergraduate students from a UK university engaged with a range of international mobility activities in other Western countries.</p> <p>(phenomenology)</p>	<p>citizen becoming is presented as a process of learning involving both mundane and profound change to our sense of self-in-the-world and our abilities to act-in-the-world. Such change is modelled as occurring when intrusions along the lifeworld horizons of the self-, the socio-cultural-, and/or the extended world interrupt the coherence of the lifeworld.</p>	<p>social practice in advancing students' sense of what it may mean to dwell in a global society. In such a sense of belonging, in the inclinations deriving from a personalized knowing of the Other — the sense of self-in-the-world — lies the foundation for responding to the freedoms, problems and responsibilities they are inheriting.</p>
<p>Kathleen Lilley (2015)</p>	<p>To understand the process of global citizen learning and the student mindset.</p> <p>what aspects of study abroad programmes influence students' global citizenship identities</p>	<p>Qualitative:</p> <p>Two phases of research gathered in-depth information from international higher education key informants and 21 mobility students.</p> <p>(transformative learning theory)</p>	<p>A conceptual model for global citizen learning and an "identikit" of recognisable markers for a global citizen disposition. The model identifies facilitators and manifestations of "student change" and identifies reflexivity, relationality, criticality, and the social imaginary as capacities of global mindset.</p>	<p>For students, encountering diverse others, making friends from other cultures (e.g., building friendship through shared housing), and having an influential teacher facilitated their becoming other-centred and globally minded.</p> <p>Educating all students as global citizens could be more closely aligned to the internationalisation of education and employability agendas.</p>
<p>Bernhard</p>	<p>To address the question of study abroad and identity in the North</p>	<p>Qualitative:</p> <p>in-depth, semi-structured interviews</p>	<p>Five hierarchically distinct ways for GC: Global Existence,</p>	<p>Even a small sample of students from one institution have various interpretations of GC,</p>

<p>Streitwieser &amp; Gregory Light (2016)</p>	<p>American context and asked, how do American university students understand the concept of GC</p>	<p>conducted with 29 undergraduates at a mid-sized research-intensive university in United States.  (variation theory and phenomenography).</p>	<p>Global Acquaintance, Global Openness, Global Participation, Global Commitment</p>	<p>so GC is still a very ambiguity term.  When programmes claim to be providing students with GC, they should be aware that there are different understandings of the concept in the minds of students.</p>
<p>Chen-Wei Chang (2016)</p>	<p>To explore if Taiwanese students' international mobility experiences affect their attitudes toward elements of global citizenship and identification as global citizens</p>	<p>Quantitative:  online survey of 69 Taiwanese participants (53 female 16 male) who had long-term or short-term abroad experiences before.  Questions based on a 5-point Likert scale with regression analysis.</p>	<p>Stephen Reysen's online Global Citizen Survey includes 23 items to measure participants' attitudes toward the elements of global citizenship and their interpretations of their past study abroad experiences impact their global citizenship perceptions</p>	<p>The data indicated that Taiwanese who have studied abroad tend to identify themselves as global citizens; they also generally agree with the elements of global citizenship, which might lead them to become global citizens.</p>
<p>Moskal and Schweisfurth (2018)</p>	<p>Offer a theoretically grounded analysis of international postgraduate students' perspectives on the importance and development of global citizenship knowledge and</p>	<p>A multi-sited qualitative study on the experiences of 69 returnee international postgraduate students from various non-western countries who studied in the UK.</p>	<p>How students aspire to develop 'global competences'; the challenges they face in learning and using the competences associated with international study; how they experience development during their studies; and whether and how these can be exchanged after</p>	<p>International students' acquisition of cosmopolitan competency is important to them, but does not happen easily and does not necessarily convert automatically into capital/benefits in regional and national labour markets. There are limitations to social connectedness and</p>

	competences while they are studying, and how these are valued and enacted afterwards.		graduation as 'cosmopolitan capital' in careers and personal lives.	openness often linked to the power imbalances in internationalised higher education, and the attendant limitations on their voice and agency.
Hinako Kishino & Tomoko Takahashi (2019)	Examine the development of global citizenship traits in undergraduate students at a liberal arts college in Southern California, USA.	Quantitative: 268 students participated in a survey that measured their global citizenship traits.  (cross-sectional correlational design)	Global Citizenship Scale generated by Morais and Ogden (2011). GC is defined and examined as a way of thinking and living that manifests in one's mindsets and traits such as social responsibility (e.g., self-awareness and awareness of others) and global competence (e.g., cultural empathy, the cultivation of principled decision-making, etc.	The results indicated that students face challenges and a sense of discomfort during study abroad, but their global citizenship traits tend to improve after return. The quantitative analyses suggested that the college's mandatory study abroad programmes offer students an opportunity to seek their global citizenship identities.
Nicole Blum & Doug Bourn (2019).	Identify the impact of the study abroad experience on BAsc students' world outlook, development of new skills, plans for careers and views about being global citizens.	Qualitative: four key methods: 1) literature review; 2) 11 students online questionnaire 3) interviews 4) analysis of students' dissertations  (Transformative Learning theory)	UCL's own definition of GC which incorporates three positions on global citizenship within contemporary higher education – entrepreneurial, liberal humanist, and anti-oppressive.	A number of different kinds of learning take place during study abroad, including about particular topics/issues, experiences of particular places and/or exposure to new ideas. While these experiences can be highly significant for individuals, it is important to recognise that transformative learning may not happen without support.
Paul Sherm	Explore the value of short-	mixed method: 27 semi-	The study targeted four key areas to shed	Participation in study abroad was found to

<p>an, Briann Cofield, &amp; Neve Connolly (2020)</p>	<p>term study abroad in the facilitation of students' global awareness and knowledge, their identification as global citizens and endorsement of prosocial values associated with global citizenship, and their participation as globally engaged citizens.</p>	<p>structured interviews and an online survey of 278 respondents were conducted with students who were enrolled in a study abroad course at two university in Toronto, Canada.</p>	<p>light on the efficacy of study abroad as a vehicle for global citizenship education: global awareness, global citizenship identity, endorsement of prosocial values, and global citizenship engagement. adapted from the Global Citizen Scale (Reysen &amp; Katzarska-Miller, 2013) and the Global Citizenship Scale (Morais &amp; Ogden, 2011)</p>	<p>significantly strengthen one's affiliation with global citizenship, endorsement of pro-social values and motivation to engage in global citizenship activities.</p>
<p>Chris McGrew, Zachariah Mathew &amp; John Conant (2021)</p>	<p>Compare and assess the perceived benefit of traditional study abroad and short-term, faculty-led study abroad on participants' employability skills, cultural competency and global citizenship.</p>	<p>Quantitative: 156 USA undergraduate students. Online Qualtrics questionnaire/survey used a seven-point Likert scale to examine the relationships between the skills gained during the experience and the respondents' perceptions.</p>	<p>GC is about participants' perceptions about social responsibility, global competency, and global civic engagement. It also concerns career competency skills such as teamwork, interpersonal communication, networking ability, leadership, problem solving, and foreign language skills.</p>	<p>Participants rated that the short-term, faculty-led study abroad program had a higher influence on their thinking about global citizenship in terms of how their actions influence global communities empathizing with people from other countries and thinking about current global political and economic affairs.</p>

All the reviewed 11 studies report positive impacts of study abroad on either international students' perception of GC or their skills improvement related to being global citizens, regardless of the duration of programmes, background of students and location of universities. Although these studies aimed to explore the relationships



between study abroad and GC, the backgrounds of students, research methods, conceptual frameworks and types of programme are different in each study. The majority of existing studies are conducted by Western scholars and focus on Western undergraduate students' short-term and none-degree experiences abroad. Some research (Paige, 2009; Killick 2012; McGrew, Mathew & Conant, 2021) focuses on USA or UK undergraduate students who studied in other western countries, while some (Kishino, 2019; Blum & Bourn, 2019) focused on a mixed nationality of students who studied in one specific western university. There is an obvious gap in the research on Chinese international students' GC development.

Among the existing literature on international students' GC development, only Chen (2011) has investigated Chinese postgraduate students' experiences. However, in Chen's research, Oxfam's measurement of GC, which should be only applicable for teenagers in school, was used to evaluate adult university students. So this research, which is the only existing literature focus on Chinese students' GC during postgraduate study, seems problematic in its conceptual framework of GC and is limited by a small sample size of five students from the same programme. Clearly, there remains insufficient knowledge and understanding about Chinese students' GC development that occurs during and as a result of international mobility.

Due to a lack of consensus on the definition and measurement of GC, every research study applies its own conceptual framework, which measures various factors from personal attributes to social engagement. Both qualitative methods of in-depth interviews and quantitative methods through surveys have been effectively used in different studies. Due to the various constructs through students' perceptions of GC and the complexities of their study abroad experiences, there is clear space to explore valuable insights for more in-depth qualitative research. Moreover, most researchers reported about the outcomes of studying abroad and collected data after students' have finished their programmes. Only Killick (2012) reported the processes of students' GC development through conducting three sets of interviews on each student at different stages of their study abroad programmes. There is a clear gap in understanding the processes of students' changing perceptions of GC at different times during their long-term study abroad programmes. A longitudinal design of in-

depth research is thus needed to explore the changing processes of international students' journeys of becoming global citizens.

## **Conclusion**

My research project aims to understand the relationship between Chinese students' development of global citizenship and their studying and living experiences in the UK. This literature review studied the different approaches and skills in GC development, investigated international higher education under the impact of globalisation and explored some existing challenges on study abroad in relation to GC. From the literature review, international mobility can provide university students with a platform to potentially foster global citizenship, such that students are presented with opportunities to understand GC in different perspectives and cultivate the skills needed to serve in a highly interconnected global society. Since becoming a global citizen is a process of both constructing identity and developing skills to live in a globalised world (Bourn, 2009), the research identifies GC development as a process of changing perceptions on global citizenship and improving skills to thrive in the globalised world. Therefore, the research explores GC using a value-based approach that seeks the perception of GC and a skill-based approach that emphasises developing global skills.

Research in international mobility and GC has centred on evaluating the outcomes of various programmes to match with Western institutions' mission statements (Chang, 2016; Bourn, 2021a), with limited exploration of the process of global citizen learning for Chinese international students. Universities claiming to transform international students into global citizens offer limited evidence (Schattle, 2008; Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011). Often, universities neglect to explain how they interpret what a global citizen means, particularly in terms of what specific mindsets, attitudes and skills are attributed to GC (Caruana, 2014). GC has been defined by higher education researchers as a disposition integrating a moral, social, and competent understanding (Lilley, Barker, & Harris, 2015), a global collectivist (Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011), and through aspects of social responsibility, awareness, and civic participation (Moris & Ogden, 2011), environmental attitudes, beliefs, and norms (Tarrant, 2010), and building a sense of "self in the world" ( (Killick, 2012, p. 13). All these conceptual

frameworks explaining what a global citizen is are established by Western scholars. However, there is no clear evidence that the Western notion and measurement of GC is applicable to Eastern learners. There exists plenty of space to explore Chinese students' GC development experience through in-depth qualitative research.

The key elements of GC and the theory of transformative learning explored in this literature review will serve as guidelines and indicators to design questions and analytical frameworks in the research project. The next chapter presents the research methodology of my study.

## Chapter 4. Methodology and Methods

### Introduction

The purpose of my research is to explore how study abroad experiences influence Chinese international students' global citizenship. This chapter presents the paradigm of the research design, explains the methodology used to seek answers to the research questions, and demonstrates the methods applied for data collection and analysis. It is worth clarifying that methodology refers to "how research is conducted" and reflects how the researcher approaches the research problems (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015, p.4). As Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) noted, methodology involves a number of issues including rationale, logistics, ethics, interpretation and trustworthiness, while the term "method" usually describes particular procedures, techniques or instruments used to collect and manage data. In this chapter, the methodology refers to my overall approach to the research problems, from my philosophy of how knowledge is constructed to the detail of how I interpret the collected data.

The research design of this study is underpinned by a social constructivist approach, as the perception of GC and transformative learning are socially constructed by the students. The methodology for this study is based on a qualitative study approach, which explores different perspectives and provides in-depth interpretations of students' experiences in developing GC through conducting questionnaires and longitudinal semi-structured interviews, which are amongst the most widely used methods for conducting systematic social enquiry. Students' subjective accounts are obtained through a questionnaire of 120 students at the beginning of their study abroad programme, followed by three sets of in-depth interviews with 19 students during their master's programmes and a questionnaire at the end of the interviewees' overseas journey.

This chapter links the purpose of my study and research questions to the research design. It reveals my rationale, decision making and position as a researcher throughout the research process. To be specific, I explain the following issues in this chapter: 1) the paradigm and philosophy of my research; 2) my position as a researcher; 3) the longitudinal study approach; 4) research scope and sample

selection; 5) the stages of my research procedure; 6) methods I used to gather data; 7) how I analysed and synthesized data; 8) ethical considerations involved in my study; 9) how I dealt with the issues of trustworthiness; and 10) my attempt to address the limitations of the study.

#### 4.1. Rationale for Research Design

In my research, I seek to understand people from their point of view within their social-cultural contexts. My philosophical assumptions served as research paradigm influences how the phenomena are studied and understood. This understanding leads to certain methodology as inquiry strategies and particular methods as different ways of gathering and analysing empirical data (Derrington, 2019). As Creswell (2009) explains that a research diagram is shaped by the researcher’s philosophical assumptions, procedure of inquiry (methodology) and methods of data collection and interpretation. The establishment of a research diagram “is also based on the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed, the researchers’ personal experiences, and the audiences for the study” (Creswell, 2009, p.21). As a theoretical framework reflecting the researchers’ belief system and worldview, my research design contains four components: ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. Table 4.1 illustrates my research design and selected research paradigm:

**Table 4. 1 Overview of Research Design**

<b>Research Design</b>	<b>My Position</b>	<b>My Research</b>
<b>Ontology</b> Researcher’s assumptions about reality, on how it exists and what can be known about it (Grix, 2004).	<b>Constructivism</b>  Social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors	The reality of GC and study abroad is subject to students’ various perceptions and experiences.
<b>Epistemology</b> The nature of knowledge and the process by which	<b>Subjectivism/ Interpretivism</b>  Reality is constructed by those who experience it and	Generate knowledge of GC through studying abroad that reflects the reality of Chinese

knowledge is acquired and validated (Patton, 2002).	thus research is a process of reconstructing that reality	international students in the UK's universities.
<b>Research Purpose</b> To establish the intent of my entire research study (Creswell, 2009).	To explore and interpret the construction of GC through the view of international students.	Understand the relationship between Chinese students' GC and study abroad experience.
<b>Research Question</b> A broad question that asks for an exploration of the central phenomenon in a study (Creswell, 2009).	Examine a phenomenon that impacts on the lived reality of individuals in a cultural and social context.	How does studying abroad impact upon Chinese students' GC development?
<b>Methodology</b> The theory, strategy, plan of action design and process that informs a researcher's approach to the production of data (Crotty, 1998).	Longitudinal, thematic study  In-depth investigation to explore the connections, patterns and context, and reflecting on the bigger picture as well as on the detail (Atkins & Wallace, 2012).	Acquire an understanding of the longitudinal experiences of Chinese postgraduate students in the UK's universities and their development toward global citizens.
<b>Method</b>  Specific means and process of collecting and analysing data.	Qualitative data collection	Questionnaire and Interviews
<b>Research Scope</b>	Attempt to generalise from the particular small-size sample selection	In-depth interviews with 19 Chinese postgraduate students from mainland China studying in three universities of various courses.
<b>Analysis of data</b>	Thematic analysis	Apply the theme of GC and global skills within the theoretical framework derived from literature review.
<b>Interpretation of findings</b>	Transformative Learning Theory, Self-reflexive	Conscious of the ways in which my own biography and identities shaped my interpretations of Chinese students and GC.

#### **4.1.1 Philosophical foundation**

The philosophical foundation of any research project is frequently described as a lens through which to study a phenomenon. In this research, my belief about the nature of reality reflects the ontology and my viewpoint on the nature of knowledge guides the epistemology. Just like “footings to the house”, ontology and epistemology serve as the philosophical foundation to my methodology (Grix, 2004, p. 59). According to Derrington (2019), the purpose of ontology and epistemology is to make sense of the data beyond the surface of the descriptive to the realm of the explanatory and discovery. The paradigm of my research is rooted within a constructivist philosophical foundation and applies a subjectivist approach for epistemology. Within a relativist ontology, this study constructs meaning from diverse realities. The ontology underpinning my study assumes that the reality of truth is not a black and white entity but is subject to various interpretations as a social construct (Glesne, 2016). The epistemology supporting my research is a subjectivist paradigm positing that human knowledge and ideas are socially constructed rather than truths awaiting discovery by a researcher (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). To lay the philosophical foundations of my methodology, I explain my ontology (Subjectivism/Interpretivism) and epistemology (Constructivism) in the following paragraphs.

My ontology is based on social constructivism, which has become a common term within educational research (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Constructivism is suitable with a research concerning the development of global citizenship and the experiences of international students since it frequently makes statements about created perceptions of the real world. Constructivism investigates the production of knowledge based on prior experiences and how students relate these experiences to the knowledge they receive (Cohen et al. 2017). Constructivism recognises learning as a far more personal and social experience than other theories, such as behaviourism and cognitivism. Constructivism is focused on the belief that learning is a social process influenced by the student’s past experiences, beliefs, and capabilities (Gall et al. 2003). In other words, Everyone interprets and comprehends the world around them in light of their own individual life experiences, and no single universal meaning or interpretation exists for all human. Therefore, I realise that students are independent and unique beings subject to individual personalities and preferences and they create meaning as

opposed to acquiring it. In my research, both students and context are important to their learning processes and outcomes, thus I construct the knowledge together with the learners based on personal perceptions and experiences.

Regarding my epistemology, the goal of interpretivism is to understand the social phenomena of study abroad in the context and viewpoints of Chinese international students. Interpretive ontology requires that social phenomena be understood “through the eyes of the participants rather than the researcher” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 21). Interpretivism is a “response to the over-dominance of positivism” (Grix, 2004, p. 82). It denies the idea that there is a single, objective reality that exists independently of our senses. So that, truth and reality are made rather than discovered. In other words, my belief in socially created multiple realities leads me to reject the idea that individuals should be examined as natural science objects. As Flick (2014) addressed, the purpose of the qualitative researcher is to understand how people interpret their experiences and make sense of their world. Therefore, I get involved with the subjects and try to understand their realities. However, I am also aware that interpretivism is subjective to my own worldview, because external reality cannot be directly accessible to the observer without being contaminated by her assumptions, concepts and background (Glesne, 2016). With this in mind, my subjectivism in the research “is seen not as a passive-receptive process of representation but as an active constructive process of production” (Flick, 2004, p.89).

Within the constructivist paradigm, the theoretical perspective taken in this work is interpretive and subjective. My study intends to map the interpretations of GC in the literature and investigate the application of the constructed GC and Transformative Learning Framework through a thematic qualitative study. While there are no universal truths, constructs such a framework can offer a bridge or translation tool between different interpretations of the phenomenon of Chinese students’ international mobility and GC. Through deploying a constructivist approach, the selection and utilisation of qualitative design and methodology are congruent with such an approach. Occasionally, constructivism through qualitative research is criticised for being unscientific (Robson, 2002). However, this research study applies a systematic approach and attempts to present an authentic, critical and relevant insight into the



social construction of students as global citizens. The next section discusses my rationale and understanding of the qualitative approach.

#### **4.1.2 Qualitative approach**

The qualitative approach is based on an inherently constructivist philosophical paradigm dealing with how the complexities of sociocultural experiences are observed, perceived, and understood in a specific setting (Mason, 1996; Flick, 2007). The purpose of qualitative research design is “to examine a social situation or interaction by allowing the researcher to enter the world of others and attempt to achieve a holistic rather than a reductionist understanding” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p.19). Indeed, qualitative research focuses on achieving a depth of understanding while quantitative study intends to cover the breadth of discovery (Patton, 2002). Since my study aims to explore individual students’ subjective interpretations of GC in depth, rather than investigating the statistical extent to which such aspects are supported within the broader population, qualitative methods providing in-depth and detailed descriptions are deemed most appropriate. Qualitative research has been described as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), thus emphasising the researcher’s exploration and interpretation of the meanings of social phenomenon. As I am keen to gain an understanding of the perspectives of participants, a qualitative approach allows me to see through the eyes of the participants.

#### **4.1.3 My position in the research**

In this research, my role is to gain a holistic, systemic and integrated insight of the phenomenon under study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). As a qualitative researcher, it is important for me to adequately position myself in the research with an awareness that my assumptions, experiences and values significantly influence the way my study is implemented and interpreted. According to Grix (2004), “researchers are inextricably part of the social reality being researched and not detached from the subject they are studying” (p.83). As Richards (2006) states, the researcher’s personal

dimension determines the process quality and achievement of the research design. Therefore, I must thoroughly consider my personal opinions and perceptions that constrain or affect the study's outcome. In studying the social experiences of Chinese international students, I can be viewed as both an insider and an outsider at the same time.

As my research emphasises subjective understanding, I don't quantitatively seek to generalise or predict any causal relationship. My aim is to present a rich, detailed story that connects Chinese international students' experiences to GC and transformative learning. My relationship with the participants is a key feature in collecting data for in-depth information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell (2007) suggests that a collaborative and positive relationship between researcher and participants can maximise the research's validity and foster valuable findings. I see my research as a process in which all participants as insiders to the co-construction of knowledge to me. With the guiding principle of mutual respect and actively listening, I built a trustful and transparent rapport with all participants. Throughout the data collection process, from questionnaire to analysis and then to further interpretation, I appreciated all participants' perceptions. Moreover, as I share the same Chinese cultural identity and language with the participants, it was easy to establish and maintain effective connection during the whole research project.

My responsibility is to explain in great detail what I discovered from my data, how I make sense of my findings and what new insights I gained on understanding GC and Chinese international students. I agree with Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), in that the researcher should serve as a guide to readers, who leads them from the participants' stories to sophisticated and careful analysis of findings. Qualitative data is interpreted through the researcher's complex cognitive and emotional process (Derrington, 2019). Thus, no qualitative researcher can be completely objective in social studies. I aim to show my reflexivity and acknowledge my position in each stage of the research process. Reflexivity in qualitative research requires self-knowledge and reflection so that the assumptions and preconceptions brought into the research and possibly influencing the outcomes are clarified (Glesne, 2016). Through seeking to understand

and honestly represent my position in my research process, I allow readers to judge how my findings are relevant to their viewpoints and situation.

## **4.2. Methodology and Procedure**

The previous section explained my research philosophy and presented the overall paradigm of this study. This section focusses on discussing the rationale of my research strategy and how the research is implemented at different stages. The goal of my methodology is to explore the nature of studying abroad and GC development from the perspective of the participants, and to understand how and why they come to their particular perspectives. My study also emphasises the changing process of the students' transformative learning experience throughout their overseas journey. To investigate the meaning of GC through multiple social constructions (Robson, 2002), I, therefore, apply an interpretative study within a longitudinal approach for the design and strategy of this research.

### **4.2.1 Research Scope and sample selection**

This study intends to find a way of investigating the relationship between developing GC and study abroad. It is undertaken to investigate the Chinese postgraduate students' perceptions on the effect of study abroad at the three universities: University College London, a metropolitan university located in the centre of London; the University of Bath, a traditional campus university located in a historical British city; and the University of Reading, a well-known university in a market town 40 miles west of London. Due to the feature of location of the three universities, students' lived experiences are in contrast as urban life and town life. Instead of focusing on only one university, it provides a comparative and holistic picture on investigating three different types of university at the same time. Chinese students were chosen for this study based on three reasons. Firstly, I am from mainland China and I understand the culture and background of those students. It is easy for me to access and communicate with Chinese students. Secondly, Chinese students from mainland China are an important and dramatically increasing part of the overseas student body in the UK. Thirdly, GC development has emerged in recent years as a new desirable outcome for Chinese

students to pursue international education. Educational research is urgently needed to understand Chinese students' GC in particular.

The participants in my study were chosen using a purposeful sampling approach (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling is a qualitative study methodological approach that yields the most information about the subject under research (Silverman, 2009). In other words, with the aim of gaining insights and understanding of the phenomenon in my study, purposeful sampling enables me to select information-rich cases. As the strategy of purposeful sampling allows for data collection across various locations, I sought to locate participants at a variety of universities and courses. Although all participants are Chinese international postgraduate students, there are differences among them along the following parameters: university, discipline, gender, age, hometown and previous international experience (See Appendix E).

There were three restrictions in the selection of student samples in this research project. The first is that only Chinese students from mainland China are included in this study because it is more effective to focus on a group of students from mainland China who had similar educational and social backgrounds. Through confining my exploration to this population, I can avoid oversimplifying the heterogeneous nature of students from various Chinese communities such as in Hong Kong and Taiwan. In addition, it should be noted that the Chinese students selected for this study are not a representative sample of all mainland Chinese people, as the majority of Chinese students in the UK come from middle-class families (Wu, 2015). The second restriction is that the samples were restricted to postgraduate Chinese students on taught programmes who will stay in the UK for approximately a year., because postgraduate taught courses take less than one year in the UK. It might be obvious for these students to realise the differences and development in their ideas about GC by comparing before, during and after studying abroad. The third restriction is that these taught postgraduate Chinese students are controlled in three subject fields (business management, education, natural science) of different courses. Therefore, the expression "Chinese students" throughout my research refers to mainland Chinese postgraduate students of various courses at three universities in the UK enrolled in September 2019.

### 4.2.3 Longitudinal design

While most social studies provide a snapshot describing a phenomenon at the time of the research (Flick, 2014), longitudinal studies involve a longer time span and enable the researcher to describe change which is framed by time periods and phases (Saldaña, 2003). Longitudinal qualitative design overcomes the general limitations of quantitative approach, which only indicates outcomes of change in numerical data but not the process and nature of that change (Arksey & Knight, 1999). According to Derrington (2019), longitudinal study is about “understanding change over time in an individual or a group” (p. 2). Indeed, such an approach presents rich data on a comparative basis to better trace and understand patterns of continuous changing processes. With the aim of exploring the process-based nature and multidimensional feature of change, a longitudinal approach also investigates how and why a sociocultural phenomenon happens (Neale, 2021). In other words, my research aims to reveal how change is developed and to identify the variety of causes behind the change, at both an individual level and a group level. Change is evoked as I develop greater understanding of the social context and establish an ongoing relationship with participants over time, thereby resulting in insightful interpretations of the meaning of change.

The nature of my study required a qualitative longitudinal research method. Literature on GC development, study abroad and transformative learning suggests a lengthy period of time to analyse the process of sociocultural and educational adjustment in a new environment. Meziow’s (1997) TLT framework involves 10 steps of longitudinal changing process. Such a complex process reflects how students evolve over the course of their lived experiences in terms of their feelings, interpretations, and interactions within the change as a process. A longitudinal research perspective was undertaken that covered the time period that students spent in the UK during the university course, thereby allowing the students’ experiences and change to be examined in greater detail over the entire length of their master’s programme. With the awareness that my attention to differences through longitudinal data enables new insights (Neale, 2021), my evolving interacting with and understanding students through time becomes a major advantage for my qualitative longitudinal methodology.

As Flick (2014) explains, by allowing for a consistent and an ongoing approach to analysing study abroad experiences over time, students' responses to change and their strategies to manage changes are revealed.

In longitudinal research, the study's time span and frequency of data collection can be determined by the length of the participants' programme, within which the beginning, middle and end times can become the data-collection points (Derrington, 2019). The regularity of data collection within the time span should be a few months apart, such as three times across a year (Saldaña, 2003). Therefore, my longitudinal study was set within a time span of 10 months from September 2019 to July 2020 with three data-collection points near the beginning, middle and end of their postgraduate programmes. It is also worth mentioning that my main data collection measure, as three rounds of repeated interviews, should be comparable, but not identical (Neale, 2021). I designed each interview with different sets of questions reflecting students' various developmental stages. Moreover, noting that participant attrition is a problem in any longitudinal study (Flick, 2014), I made imperative effort on contacting and following up with each participant throughout the study to overcome the challenge with flexibility and persistence. With my effort, all 19 interviewees attended the three sets of interviews and completed a final questionnaire to fulfil the longitudinal study purpose.

#### 4.2.4 Research procedure and timeline

This section outlines my overall research procedure from completing upgrade proposal to final submission. Table 4.2 provides an illustration of the various steps involved in my study.

**Table 4. 2 Research Procedure Timetable**

Activity	Timing
Upgrade Submission	November 2018
Ethical Application Approval at UCL-IOE	April 2019
Reviewed literature (on GC, study abroad, Chinese international students and transformative learning) comprehensively;	December

Identified conceptual framework for research design.	2018- June 2019
Preparation for data collection; Designed questionnaire and interview questions; Contacted gatekeepers for participant recruitment.	August 2019
Conducted Questionnaire; Selected and contacted participants for interviews; Preparation of interview protocols; Pilot interview with two colleagues to test interview questions.	September – October 2019
First round of interviews with 19 students (face-to-face); Transcript and analysis of interview data; Sent interview summary for students to review.	November 2019
Second round of interviews with 19 students (face-to-face); Transcript and analysis of interview data; Sent interview summary for students to review.	March 2020
Third round of interviews (online) with 19 students; Transcript and analysis of interview data; Sent summary of interview transcripts to each participant for confirmation and feedback.	June 2020
Follow-up questionnaire with the 19 participants.	July 2020
Interpretated findings and wrote up	August 2020 - June 2021
Conclusions and preparing for submission	July-December 2021

This section provides a list of steps in carrying out my research, from preparing data collection to writing up the data analysis. The two sections that follow elaborate in greater detail on the methods of data collection and the process of data analysis.

### 4.3. Data Collection Methods

In order to explore students' perceptions and outcomes of their study abroad experiences, this study applies qualitative methods to collect and analyse data, as qualitative research is a research method that emphasises narratives and experiences of study subjects rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). The research applies a qualitative and interpretative

approach within a longitudinal study which consists of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The research questions were addressed using a questionnaire of 120 students, followed by longitudinal in-depth interviews with 19 students and ended by a final questionnaire with the interviewees. Three sets of interviews were conducted with each student: near the beginning, at the middle and at the end of their one-year master's degree study programme. The interpretative research method of combining questionnaires and in-depth interviews provides both general perceptions of the sample with a relatively wide coverage and deep, detailed, personal and practical information from a few samples selected deliberately from the results of the questionnaire.

#### Types of data needed for my research

To answer my research questions, I need to collect four general types of data: theoretical, contextual, demographic and perceptual information (Bloomberg & Volpe , 2008). Firstly, theoretical information was collected and analysed through a literature review to establish my conceptual framework of GC development through transformative learning. The theoretical data provides support for my interpretation and synthesis of the findings with the existing body of knowledge, as well as guide me to draw conclusions and recommendations; Secondly, contextual information, which I obtained through reviewing policy documents and relevant literatures, describes the background and setting of my research, including the trends of international higher education, statistics of Chinese students in the UK and elements within the environment of my thematic qualitative study; Thirdly, demographic information, regarding participants' profiles (age, gender, university, course, hometown and previous international experience), was generated through the questionnaire at the beginning of my research project (Appendix E). Fourthly, perceptual information, as the most critical data generated through in-depth interviews, refers to students' perceptions and reflections on their learning and lived experiences during study abroad. To ensure the quality of my research, I need to triangulate all types of data to formulate comprehensive evidence that support my findings (Ishak & Bakar, 2012). In the following section, I demonstrate how these four types of information were collected to answer my research questions.



### Methods for answering each research question

The purpose of the research is to reveal the relationship between GC development and study abroad. To be more specific, the research focus is on Chinese postgraduate students' one year of academic study and life experiences in three prestigious universities in the UK. The main research question is "how do study abroad experiences influence Chinese students' perceptions of being global citizens?" There are four sub-questions closely related to the main research question. These research questions serve as my navigational tools for mapping possible directions as well as unexpected results in my research journey. In my study, the ongoing process of questioning is "an integral part of understanding the unfolding lives and perspectives" of the Chinese international students in the UK (Agee, 2009, p.432).

Table 4.3 demonstrates how different combinations of methods were used to address each research question:

**Table 4. 3 Methods to Answer Research Questions**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Methods</b>
1. To what extent do Chinese students consider becoming global citizens as a motivation to study abroad?	Literature review on both Chinese and Western scholars' studies on Chinese international students
	Questionnaire (providing multiple choice questions) for 120 students
	First interviews at the beginning of study abroad
2. What experiences trigger and facilitate students' learning towards becoming global citizens? To what extent is this experience transformative?	Literature review on Chinese international students' experiences abroad
	Literature review on Transformative Learning Theory
	Three sets of interviews at the beginning, middle and end of study abroad programme

3. What are the changes in students' perceptions of GC through study abroad?	Identify perspectives and framework of GC from literature review
	Three sets of interviews at the beginning, middle and end of study abroad programme
4. What are the perceived global skills students develop through study abroad?	Literature review on global skills and global competency
	Three sets of interviews at the beginning, middle and end of study abroad programme
	Questionnaire at the end of study abroad to the 19 interviewees

The table demonstrates the use of multiple methods of data collection (questionnaire and interview) to achieve triangulation, which is an effective way to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and participants' perceptions under my study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). These questions not only seek to inquire about the phenomena of Chinese students' experiences in the UK and their understanding and perceptions related to GC, but also signal the relevance of my study to the field of GC, international mobility and Chinese students. The data collected from my research contributes to five main objectives related to the research questions: 1) to investigate motivations that led to students' decisions; 2) to discover the context and nature of students' experiences; 3) to explore participants' perspectives and change through their overseas journey; 4) to reflect the world from participants' viewpoints; 5) to generate recommendations and suggestions to educators and students. Therefore, my main data collection method is the in-depth interview, while questionnaires are used in conjunction to provide supportive evidence. The following section explains in detail how each method was applied.

#### 4.3.1 Questionnaires

The first stage of my research process was an online questionnaire of 11 questions to explore Chinese international postgraduate students' general understanding of GC and collect some basic demographic and background information for purposeful

selection of candidates to participate in the longitudinal interviews. The questionnaire (see in Appendix A) was designed based on samples of research on international students' mobility and GC (e.g. Friar, 2016; Yang, 2018). The initial questionnaire was reviewed by my supervisors and tested with two of my Chinese peers before distribution. Considering the likely response rate and the availability of resources, the questionnaire was distributed to around 600 taught postgraduate Chinese students in three universities by email and posts in students' WeChat groups. There were 120 valid questionnaires returned by students with a response rate of 20%. All respondents ranged from 23 to 35 years old and were from mainland China. They had enrolled in master's programmes in September of academic year 2019 through 2020 at three universities. It is important to take into consideration that among Chinese postgraduate students in the UK, 66% are female and 34% are male in 2019 (New Oriental, 2020). This uneven gender distribution was manifested in the response of the initial 120 questionnaires in which 70% were received from female students and in the interviews, four of the 19 participants 14 are females.

In keeping with the qualitative research tradition, the questionnaire served as a strategy to recruit interviewees and acted as a useful complement to the main interview data-collection method in my research. The questionnaire method can aid qualitative research early on by identifying the sample group and their relevant background and position, which can be further examined in interviews (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). The results of the initial questionnaire revealed some common traits of Chinese international students in the UK, which are discussed in the next findings chapter. Among the 120 valid returned questionnaires, 59 students were from UCL, 36 from the University of Reading and 25 from the University of Bath. Some 31 students provided their contact details (phone number, WeChat ID and email) to confirm their willingness to participate in further interviews. Based on those students' details (gender, age, major, hometown, previous international experience), I selected 25 students from a mixed background who met the criteria of the research to ensure a less biased and more representative sample population. I contacted each respondent to provide information of my research topic and clarify the time needed for their attendance. Eventually, 19 students (see Appendix E) agreed to commit around three hours in total for all three rounds of interviews.

The initial questionnaire was designed to collect some basic information of the targeted group of Chinese students in the three universities and to select the appropriate candidates for the longitudinal interviews. I also conducted another questionnaire specifically for the interview participants to gain a clear picture of their perception of GC development during study in the UK to supplement the interview results. Questionnaires may be used in conjunction with qualitative interviews to acquire personal views and attitudes from respondents by employing a standard design with the same questions (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). At the end of their postgraduate programmes in July 2020, all 19 students who participated in the interview stage completed a questionnaire. The questionnaire (see in Appendix G) focused on to what extent do those students agree with statements on how overseas experiences can impact on different aspects of their GC development, such as global outlook, intercultural communication, critical thinking and professional development. The results of this questionnaire serve as an indication which confirms and strengthens my findings from the interviews.

All questionnaires were written in both Chinese and English. The reasons are: firstly, the exact meanings of some terms related to GC such as the “global outlook” might be misunderstood by Chinese speakers without translation; secondly, the thinking style and vocabulary of the participants are reflected more accurately in Mandarin Chinese. Having questionnaires in two languages and answers to questions in Chinese, avoided any misunderstandings and facilitated accuracy in the answering.

#### **4.3.2 In-depth interview**

The purpose of my research is to explore in great depth the nature of Chinese students' international mobility and the ways in which such experiences impact GC development. Thus, an in-depth interview is a suitable method of collecting data for my research project that aims to develop a deeper understanding of complex issues and process (Flick, 2014). According to Arksey and Knight (1999), the interview as a research method can allow researchers to gain a greater insight into the relations between individuals and their experiences. Since this study focuses on students' perceptions of abstract concepts (GC, global outlook, sense of self, globalisation) and intangible skills (emotional, cognitive and behavioural abilities), it is necessary to use a method

which could enable such an insightful understanding. Yet another reason behind the choice of interview as the method of data collection is the fact that the concept of global citizenship and global skills is still vague for Chinese students. Patton (1990) points out that semi-structured interviews are useful when the research is studying an unfamiliar and abstract topic. Throughout conducting the semi-structured interviews, principal themes of GC and questions were pre-determined, but flexibility was available for interviewees to shape their own responses within the bounds of their creativity.

My interview schedule, Information Sheet, Consent Form and questions were reviewed and approved by my supervisors in October 2019. After that, I conducted two pilot interviews with my Chinese colleagues to test the interview questions and revised the format of a few questions to make them easier to understand. Based on the responses from the initial questionnaire, 19 students were interviewed three times at the beginning of their study (November 2019), in the middle (March 2020) and at the end (June 2020) of their study (see Appendix E for participants' demographic information). All the interview questions and answers were in the language of Mandarin Chinese, because the participants felt more at ease to use their mother tongue to share their perceptions and feelings with me as also a native Chinese speaker. The first and second rounds of interviews were conducted face-to-face in pre-booked study rooms or cafés on the students' campus. Due to the regulation of data collection during COVID-19, the third round of interviews was conducted online through WeChat voice call, which is the most popular communication software among Chinese students. All interviews were recorded by a digital audio recorder and transferred to my laptop for transcription.

The first round of interviews was conducted near the beginning of the autumn term in November 2019. Each interview lasted around 45 minutes and covered topics including (see Appendix D):

- Students' motivations to study abroad and their previous international experiences.
- Students' understandings of the concept of 'global citizenship', whether they saw themselves as global citizens.

- Students' perceptions of any links between their study abroad experiences and global citizenship development.

The second round of interviews took place in the middle of the students' postgraduate programme in March 2020. All second interviews were conducted face-to-face, while some participants were wearing face masks, as it was the beginning of COVID-19 and some Chinese students preferred to use face masks to feel safe. As the students already had six months study and living experiences in the UK before the second interview, the interview questions focused on students' experiences, the change of their perceptions and the improvement of their global skills. Interview questions (see Appendix D) were related to:

- How students feel about their study abroad experiences in the past six months.
- What impact those experiences have on shaping them into global citizens.
- What global skills they improved during their learning and living experience.

The third round of interviews were taken near the end of the students' postgraduate programme in June 2020. The third interviews were conducted through WeChat's video call function due to the constraints imposed during the COVID-19 outbreak, restricting the face-to-face interview method. In addition, half of the participants had already returned to China. The face-to-face interview method at the participants' UK campuses were a major part of my initial research plan, but worldwide travel limits, social distancing standards and public health requirements made that impossible. As a result, I had to change my research design and work out how I could conduct interviews while crossing geographic borders in a secure, suitable, and viable manner. Fortunately, technology advancements, such as internet videoconferencing services like WeChat, brought new opportunities for distanced online interviews with Chinese participants. With over 1.5 billion registered users, WeChat (Tencent Holdings Ltd.) is the most popular social media app in China, and is a useful platform for distanced research due to its vast familiarity (Lawrence, 2020). Platforms restricted in China, such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, or Microsoft Teams, could not be accessed easily by the participants. In terms of accessibility, convenience, and comfort of use, WeChat was deemed the best of the remaining alternatives, and all the

participants confirmed that WeChat's video call was the only method they preferred to use for distanced interviews.

The final interview, which lasted around one hour for each student, was more flexible and less structured compared to the two previous interviews. In that stage, the students were encouraged to reflect on the whole story of their study abroad journey and the relevance of their journey to becoming global citizens. The interview questions (see Appendix D) were related to:

- How students perceive their overall lived experiences in the UK.
- How the study abroad experiences contributed to making the students global citizens.

To ensure desirable outcomes, I prepared all the interviews properly and sensitively employed a variety of questioning strategies, then reviewed the interview transcripts to identify areas where additional attention was needed to double check with interviewees (Richards 2006). During each interview session, I followed a standardised interview schedule (See Appendix D) with 12 to 15 questions to ask all participants with well-designed impromptu questions to evoke in-depth reflections. My role as the interviewer was to engage and encourage but not to become personally involved. My goal was to perceive participants' experiences through their own viewpoints and to understand how and why they came to their particular perspectives (Gubrium & Holstein 2001). Throughout the interviews, I created a comfortable and informal atmosphere to facilitate more open and flexible engagement between me and the participants, thus improving the quality of the interviews' outcome. On completion of the interviews, the audio recording was transcribed verbatim in Mandarin Chinese, and the relevant content was translated into English after coding (see a sample of Interview Transcript with Translation in Appendix F). After each interview, I sent every interviewee a summary (in Chinese) to clarify some key points they made and asked their verification.

#### **4.4. Data Analysis**

As a bilingual Chinese and English speaker, I transcribed all 57 interviews (3 sets of 19 interviews) in their original Chinese language, coded the transcripts also in Chinese using NVivo 12, then translated the coded data into English with great accuracy. The analysing of interview data began after a summary of each transcript of the audio-recorded interview was checked by the interviewee to ensure accuracy. Thematic analysis within an interpretive approach was selected to inform my qualitative research study, thereby enabling recognition of how students perceived their lived experiences in relation to GC development. My data analysis process was based on the three phases that Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) suggest as “data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing, interwoven before, during, and after data collection in the parallel form” (p.39). This approach to thematic analysis was therefore characterised by a focus on developing a thematic coding system from the students’ narrative and guided by my research questions and conceptual framework. This section explains my overall approach for data analysis and interpretation.

##### **4.4.1 Thematic coding**

A thematic analysis approach is taken to condensate (coding) and interpret the collected interview data. Thematic analysis empowers the participants’ own perceptions on their experience as a key component in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This allows participants to explore the issue in their own terms, free of any limits imposed by fixed-response questions present in quantitative research, allowing participants' opinions of any given circumstance to be completely appreciated (Miles et al, 2014). Given that student interviews are the major source of data for this study, thematic analysis is identified as the appropriate method for data analysis in qualitative research. Thematic analysis focuses on distinct experience types and themes (Silverman, 2009). It goes beyond just counting phrases or words in a piece of text to detect implicit and explicit concepts within the data. It also emphasises data organisation and comprehensive data descriptions, with a focus on detecting, evaluating, and documenting patterns from the gathered material (Braun & Clarke 2006). As a result, it is vital for me to look beyond superficial definitions and strive to provide a full explanation of the data's significance.



The goal of the thematic coding is to identify themes as emerging patterns in the data and to make sense of these themes to address my research questions (Braun & Clarke 2006). My analytical coding process is both deductive and inductive. The initial themes of my coding schema were deductively generated from the review of literature, data that emerged from the pilot interviews and my own experiences, which provided me a system of categories to pre-code the data. At the beginning of the coding process, I carefully read through the raw data, including interview transcripts and my research notes, to categorise them according to my research questions and assign initial codes to relevant information based on the initial themes from my conceptual framework (see Table 4.4). I identified a number of pre-existing themes related to GC based on Douglas Bourn's *A New Framework for Global Skills (2018)* as described in the previous chapter. In my research project, these elements of GC were used as indicators to explore students' GC development. Table 4.4 served as guidance for my initial deductive coding. This iterative process of deductive open coding led to the ongoing refinement of my final coding schema (see Table 4.5 in the next section).

**Table 4. 4 Initial Themes and Indicators for Coding Data**

Theme	Indicator
Perspective on global citizenship, global outlook and globalisation	three lenses (neoliberal, cosmopolitan, critical pedagogical)
Global identity and awareness	How students see themselves and the connections between what is happening in their own community and in the communities of people elsewhere in the world
Global values and outlook	Students' recognition of what it means to live and work in a global society and of the value of having a broad global outlook that respects, listens to and values perspectives other than their own.
Global knowledge and understanding	Students' understanding of the impact of global forces on their life and the lives of other people, and what this means in terms of a sense of place in the world.

Global digital literacy and the use of ICT	Students' views on the value of ICT and how best to use it, in a way that is self-reflective and critical, that questions data and information.
Global critical thinking	Students' openness to a continued process of self-reflection, critical dialogue and questioning of one's own assumptions about the world.
Global collaboration and networking	Students' ability to work with others who may have different viewpoints and perspectives, being prepared to change their opinions as a result of working with others and seeking cooperative and participatory ways of working.
Global responsibility and engagement	Students' confidence, belief and willingness to seek a more just and sustainable world

#### 4.4.2 Coding procedure

The challenge throughout my coding procedure was making sense of large amounts of information from 57 in-depth interviews, reducing the volume of data, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework to address all research questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). To successfully manage this process, I conducted each round of interviews and coding simultaneously to avoid the risk of repetitious and overwhelming data at the end of the overall data collection. Based on Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) recommendation on the sequence of data analysing, I developed and followed a coding procedure of six steps after each set of interviews: 1) Assigned per-determined initial codes and themes to the set of interview transcripts and research journal; 2) Organised and analysed coded information to identify similar themes and categories, relationships and differences between variables, and patterns and common sequences within and across subgroups; 3) Reflected and evaluated the emerged patterns and themes to formulate a new coding scheme inductively; 4) Reviewed and coded all the data again based on the new coding scheme; 5) Elaborated and noted my own interpretations and propositions to generalise initial findings consistencies with the database, and 6) Compared and integrated my proposed generalisations and assertions with existing literature to formalise findings.

Through these six phases of the coding process, I was able to synthesise the fragmented interview data together to reconstruct a holistic explanation of all the research questions. Table 4.5 displays the final coding schemes that emerged from my analysing of all relevant data. This coding matrix provides a detailed narrative of the students' study and lived experiences throughout their postgraduate programme and their perceptions on the impacts of such experiences on their personal, social and professional life.

**Table 4. 5. The Final Themes from Coding**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>
<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Why choose to study in the UK</b>	Academic advancement, employment, personal development
	<b>Motivation of having global outlook/GC</b>	Understanding of GC before study abroad, plan for GC development
<b>Triggers and facilitators of GC development</b>	<b>Study Experience</b>	Class discussion, coursework, teamwork, personal tutor, online learning, dissertation
	<b>Life Experience</b>	Culture shock, Language barrier, Social activities (students' society, part-time jobs, local community), Western media, Covid-19
<b>Change of Perception on GC</b>	<b>Views on Globalisation and Global Outlook</b>	In three lenses:  Neoliberal, Cosmopolitan and Critical
	<b>Definition of GC and Global Outlook</b>	
	<b>Identity as Global Citizen</b>	

<b>Improvement of Global Skills</b>	<b>Critical Thinking</b>	academic skill, see the world differently.
	<b>Communication and Engagement</b>	English skill, community, social media, activities.
	<b>Culture Awareness</b>	understanding, respect, empathy
	<b>Personal Growth</b>	Confidence and Independence openness, adaptability
	<b>Digital literacy</b>	Use of social media, online learning
<b>Outcome of GC development</b>	<b>Personal development</b>	Inclusiveness, international lifestyle
	<b>Professional development</b>	international outlook, work in international companies

Throughout the coding procedure, I used NVivo12 as a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) to manage my data organisation, processing and storing. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017), qualitative software can effectively ease and enhance information management processes while ensuring the rigorous and quality of data analysing. NVivo software was appropriate to use in the conducted qualitative study as an aid to perform data storing, categorising, coding, linking, comparing and retrieving (QSR International, 2020). Data from all the interview transcriptions and my research journal were imported and coded in NVivo. Based on the guidance from Jackson and Bazeley (2019), I applied NVivo to achieve the five main tasks in the data analysis: 1) Importing and organising all the rich texts material; 2) Coding fragments of text into key Nodes (codes); 3) Arranging codes into clusters and hierarchies; 4) Sorting and retrieving coded data with different combinations and search terms, and 5) Adding interpretation memos and comments to existing data files. Within each step using NVivo, I was aware that the meaning of qualitative data is

multifaceted (Ishak & Bakar, 2012), thus making sense of all data based on the context of the studied phenomenon.

#### **4.4.3 Interpretation of findings**

The interpretation of my qualitative findings is both a rigid science and creative art (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Indeed, the scientific nature requires a disciplined, strategic and systematic approach with a critical and intellectual perspective, while the artistic dimension allows discovery and innovation to create new ideas and knowledge. To interpret the collected qualitative data, a holistic perspective was applied to interpret and understand Chinese students' experiences and changes observed from the findings. Students' holistic experience involves the whole process of how they make sense of themselves, others and the world (Killick, 2011). My findings focus on how students perceive their study and lived experiences in relation to GC development while constructing meaning of their international mobility within the cultural, academic and social context in the UK. The goal of my interpretation is not to discover universal and value-free truth and knowledge (Grix, 2004), but to understand how Chinese international students perceive reality and social phenomena from their unique viewpoints. Therefore, I tried to avoid making broad generalisations and normative assertions in my findings in order to critically reflect on individual students' learning journeys.

To interpret students' journey of GC development, my analysis of findings is grounded in the constructivist theory of Transformative Learning. In general, this constructive framework views learning as a meaning making process centred by students' interactions with new surroundings and reflection on their experiences (Mezirow, 1994). International mobility, according to Murphy-Lejeune (2003), is an intercultural experience that begins with discomfort and loss, a confrontation with a new environment that can forcefully shock individuals and disrupt their assumed worldview. It puts people in situations where adaptability and transformation are required if they are to make the most of their new circumstances. In other words, life abroad is a vast natural learning environment that stimulates many more facets of learners' personalities than are often addressed in educational institutions. It may be generally

conceptualized as an encounter between an person and a new environment in which the person is transformed through adaptation.

Self-reflexivity is crucial for the interpretation of the findings (Mills & Birks, 2014), since I share some degree of the same identity with the research participants as Chinese international students and somehow differ from them on my personal journey and perception towards GC. It is therefore important to keep in mind the influence of my own thoughts, perspectives, interpretations and behaviour upon all elements of the research. Based on the analysis and synthesis, I moved forward to the broader implications of my research to formulate several practical recommendations.

#### **4.5. Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues can arise in all phases of my research process: data collection, data analysis and interpretation and dissemination of the research findings. As a qualitative researcher, who is responsible for informing and protecting respondents (Glesne, 2016), I need to establish safeguarding measures to protect the rights of my participants including informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and preventing physical and psychological harm (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The risk and potential harm of my research is relatively very low to the participants, because the nature of the study is to explore adult students' perceptions on their experiences and understand the phenomenon without any interventions. In this case, the main ethical issues are with regard to consent, confidentiality, privacy and sensitive topics in all stages of the research. Based on the guidelines in the UCL Statement on Research Integrity, my research was led in compliance with BERA – British Educational Research Association Guidelines (2018). My ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed in the ethics approval application to the UCL Institute of Education's Research Ethics Committee (REC). The approved Ethical Application Form is attached in Appendix H.

Firstly, throughout the overall procedure of questionnaire and in-depth interviews, my key principles to conduct this research are honesty, confidentiality, respect and transparency. In the initial participant recruitment documents, I honestly presented the context and purpose of my research. The procedure of the research and the approximate time commitment, which is 15 minutes for the questionnaire and three 60

minutes sessions for the interviews, were stated at the beginning of the questionnaire and the information sheet of the interview. The interviewees were given both the Consent Form and Information Sheet before they decided to take part in the interview. I made sure that participants had enough information to be willing to opt in. The procedures for each interview are laid out in the Information Sheet and were clearly explained to interviewees before interview. I also informed the interviewees about their right to withdraw from the research project at any stage on the consent form and reminded them verbally at the beginning of each interview. With the principle of ensuring all participants retained autonomy and were well-informed, informed consent remained a priority throughout my study.

Secondly, the central issue with respect to protecting participants is the ways in which the information is treated. During all phases of data collection, reporting and dissemination, participants' privacy and rights were considered of primary importance. An ethical issue around confidentiality arises in that individuals' perspectives of their experiences are being sought. Students might be rightly anxious or worried that what they say would be reported outside of the research process, or whether staff from their university might judge them on what they say. Full confidentiality was assured both in writing on the information sheet and in a verbal statement in each session of the interviews. I made it clear to participants that I would not discuss the content of their interview either formally or informally with any staff member or student in their university. I committed to keeping participants' names and other significant identity characteristics confidential. All students in my research are anonymised to ensure that they cannot be identified. All the audio recordings from the interviews and the transcripts were kept in my personal computer under password protection during the research. After the research, I will delete all the audio records and keep part of the transcripts in confidential storage in case of reference or if they are needed in the future. Cautionary measures were taken to secure the storage of research-related records and data, and nobody other than the myself has access to these materials.

Thirdly, due to COVID-19, the third round of interviews was conducted through an online platform, leading to three major challenges that arose from conducting distanced interviews. First, the Chinese government's internet censorship bans numerous Western online platforms, reducing the number of interview platforms

available and WeChat's platform was the only one preferred by all participants of this research. Secondly, the ubiquitous online surveillance on Chinese media platforms restricts the sort of speech that may be delivered through these channels, which must avoid anything that is contentious or politically sensitive. Thirdly, online interviews brought practical considerations about time zones and digital capabilities that would not have arisen in face-to-face interviews. Therefore, while many fundamental ethical concerns apply in both online and face-to-face situations, conducting online interviews through WeChat posed unique ethical challenges (Lawrence, 2020). Prior to the online interviews, I made sure that my questions avoided any sensitive topics for the interviewee's own safety and confidentiality. I avoided all controversial topics, such as the participants' opinions on the Chinese government and policies that I believed might infringe on political or contentious conversations. Regardless of the value of the data to my research, I felt an ethical obligation as the researcher to interrupt talks that strayed into sensitive themes.

Lastly, although there was no potential risk posed to any participants, my study employed various safeguards to ensure the protection of their rights and well-being. As the research project focuses on students' study experiences, the topic did not involve anything emotionally arousing or contained any sensitive information. In some interview questions concerning the interviewee's value and perspective about their identities, feelings of their experiences and opinions on their surroundings, I must respect their answers without any judgment. The research questions didn't involve any political discussion such as students' opinions on Chinese government and policy. I emphasised to students that the research is an educational study without any intent to collect their political views. Occasionally, when a few students talked about something emotionally or politically sensitive, I treated them without any judgement and stayed neutral without any comments on their views. Meanwhile, I kept all the information confidential and only analysed data related to my research questions.

#### **4.6. Trustworthiness and limitations**

This section discusses and evaluates the issue of trustworthiness and limitations of my research. As a qualitative researcher, I strive to take control of any possible biases



that could exist throughout my study's design, implementation and interpretation. Therefore, this section also presents the strategies planned to enhance trustworthiness and reduce limitations.

#### **4.6.1 Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, trustworthiness indicates the researcher's attempts to solve the conventional quantitative problems of validity, as "the degree to which something measures what it purports to measure" and reliability, as "the consistency with which it measures it over time" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p.29). For Guba and Lincoln (1998), trustworthiness includes the aspects of credibility, dependability, and transferability in qualitative inquiry. This section discusses each issue respectively.

Credibility refers to the extent to which the participants' experiences and viewpoints fit into the researcher's portrayal of their stories in the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). In other words, whether the researcher correctly describes the participants' thoughts, feelings, and actions. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility reflects the adequacy of data collected from the field, which should include various types of data gathered in different methods and from a wide enough sample population. The criterion of credibility suggests whether the findings are credible and accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants and the readers (Creswell, 2003). This criterion became a key component of my research design. As a researcher with an open and honest attitude, I aim to always clarify the subjectivity and bias I brought into the research. Through monitoring my own subjective perception by recording a reflective journal and field notes throughout the whole research process, I constantly searched for variation in understanding the phenomenon studied. Furthermore, to ensure that my own biases did not influence how participants' perspectives were portrayed, I kept sending each interviewee a summary of the interview transcript for verification after every round of data collection.

Dependability means the documentation of the research, including records of decision on my research design, the overall research procedure and my reflection on the collected data can be reconstructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This criterion parallels

reliability in quantitative research, which refers to whether the processes and measures used to collect and interpret the data can be tracked and replicated by other similar studies (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Moreover, I need to prove that both my methodological and interpretive approach lead to the validity and reliability of the conclusions (Mason, 1996). To ensure such dependability, the most important issue is whether the findings are consistent and dependable with the data collection and analysis. Thus, I provide a detailed explanation of my research rationale and procedure in this chapter and all documentations generated in the research in the appendix to eliminate inconsistencies might occur.

Transferability is whether and to what extent the specific sample group, phenomenon and setting in my research can be transferred to another particular context by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) argued that transferability is not about requiring data collection to cover a representatively massive sample population, but how well the study enables other researchers to determine if similar processes might work in their own research field and settings. Thus, transferability refers to the readers' judgment on the level of adaptability of my research fitting into other contexts. Patton (1990) viewed transferability as "context-bound extrapolations" (p. 491) and "speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical, conditions" (p. 489). To this end, I enhance my research's transferability by offering thick and rich descriptions and interpretations of the participants' experiences in the context, because the richness, detailed and in-depth interpretations provide the basis for qualitative findings to be relevant in other settings (Manson, 1996). Therefore, through providing readers with sufficient and detailed information about the background and contents of my research, I can share a holistic approach which might become a valuable reference for other researchers.

#### **4.6.2 Limitations**

In the above sections, I explained how my research was implemented in a rigorous and systematic manner. There exist some limiting conditions which may challenge the research's trustworthiness, so I must minimise the impacts caused by the limitations.

These limitations include issues of researcher bias and participant reactivity, restricted sample size, narrowed selection of participants and sites, and a reliance mainly on interview techniques for data collection. Some limitations are inherent in the common critiques of qualitative research methodology in general and others are situated within the research design and the specific setting. The interpretive paradigm applied in this research has been criticised for a lack of objectivity in describing the natural reality and incapable of generalising theories for large populations (Grix, 2004). However, the social phenomenon of Chinese international students' learning journeys in this study, situated in a complex and subjective social world, could be best explored through a qualitative and interpretive approach, instead of through a positivist method.

First of all, the unique features of qualitative research pose potential limitations in its subjectivity, including the researcher's bias and participants' reactivity in general. The limitation of qualitative methodology is related to its inevitable dependence on the researcher's own past experiences, knowledge and standpoint, as well as the attitude of authenticity and integrity in data collection and interpretation (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Therefore, an overriding concern is that of the researcher's assumptions, interests, values and perceptions that can influence the research process and conclusions. One of the key limitations of this study is the issue of subjectivity and potential bias regarding my own identity as a previous Chinese international student. To reduce the limitation of potential bias during data analysis, I asked each participant to check and confirm the summaries of their interviews to avoid misunderstanding. To address the problem of participant reactivity, I hosted all interviews in a comfortable environment with well-prepared probing questions to encourage open and in-depth dialogue. Meanwhile, I continued to reflect on how I might influence the participants and what impact could occur in my findings. My previous research experience and insightful feedback from my supervisors throughout the data collection and analysing process were very helpful in this regard.

Aside from issues related to the nature of qualitative design, a further major limitation of this study is that the research sample was restricted. Therefore, a critique of this research might be the limited possibility of generalising this study to other groups of international students. Although generalisability was not the intended goal of my qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I attempt to enhance the transferability so

that my research can be relevant in a broader context. By providing thick and rich descriptions of participants' transformative journeys, as well as detailed information regarding the background and setting of the study, the knowledge and recommendations generated could be valuable and applicable in other contexts. Acknowledging that there are multiple ways of exploring social reality in qualitative research, I admit that the way of research design and interpretation of findings offered only one approach to my research's purpose. Given the same research problems or set of data, other researchers might have different solutions and tell different stories.

Finally, the global COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on this research, since the usual and expected challenges of study have been amplified as the participants' ways of life and study had been altered dramatically. In light of social distancing and worldwide travel constraints, this research offers a reflective account of my research experience switching from face-to-face to online interviews at the end of the students' study abroad journey in June 2020. Based on Richards' (2006) suggestion on how to ensure the quality of qualitative research, I made efforts to address the following issues to reduce potential limitations: 1) Applied appropriate data collection and analysis techniques driven by my research questions; 2) Made explicit my subjectivity and bias in the research and found strategies to minimise them; 3) Honestly presented negative instances and findings that did not conform with my research framework; and 4) Demonstrated my ethical values and commitment to educational practice in a wider context. Finally, I believe with my honest and conscientious effort throughout the research, it is likely that the detailed inquiry approach and lessons learnt from the findings are resonant with scholars across the field of international higher education.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, a detailed explanation of my research methodology is presented in this chapter. It demonstrates my understanding of the following: the philosophical foundations of qualitative research, the challenges facing qualitative researchers, my position in the research, the design of a longitudinal study, application of data

collection method, approach to data analysis, ethical issues and limitations of my research. The research design of this study is underpinned by a social constructivist approach, as the perception of GC and transformative learning experience are socially constructed by the students. In order to explore students' subjective perceptions and reflections on their study abroad experiences, this study applies qualitative methods to collect and analysis data, as qualitative research is a research approach that emphasises narratives and experiences of study subjects rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data to describe outcomes. In my view, the fundamental principles and main features of qualitative research design fit will with the purpose of my study and research questions. The nature of my research match with the qualitative tradition in many ways, such as: exploring the process of students' GC development whereby change and actions take place, developing a contextual understanding of students' transformative journey, facilitating interactive communication between the researcher and participants to discover profound perceptions, adopting an interpretive stance to reflect multiple constructs of social meaning, and maintaining a flexible approach in the research process.

I address careful consideration of the interrelationship between the research design components including my study's purpose, research paradigm, research questions, methods and issue of trustworthiness. The qualitative design of the thematic study is used to explore the transformative learning process of students' GC development during study abroad. The participant group consists of 19 purposefully selected Chinese international students of various majors from three universities in the UK. Two types of data collection methods were employed, including questionnaires and interviews. The data were reviewed and coded deductively according to the conceptual framework, and then inductively based on emergent themes. The subjective nature of this research requires me as the researcher to closely investigate the real-life experiences of participating students and interpret their narrative accounts in a qualitative manner. The constructivist theory of Transformative Learning was applied to interpret the coded data.

The next chapter presents the findings from my interpretation of the collected data.

## Chapter 5. Findings: Students' Journey of Global Citizenship Development

### Introduction

The purpose of my research is to understand the relationship between GC development and international mobility, with a focus on Chinese postgraduate students' lived experiences in the UK. This chapter presents the findings of the longitudinal qualitative study in the sequence of my four research questions, which reflects the students' perceptions on their GC development through study abroad. As my research defines the term 'global citizenship' (GC) as students' values and sets of skills to enable them to live in a globalised world, the findings explore the relationship between Chinese students' GC and their study abroad experiences on a value-based approach and a skill-focused evaluation. The rich qualitative data presented in this chapter are mainly generated from three rounds of in-depth interviews with 19 Chinese students of various majors including social sciences (education, social research), natural sciences (medical science, public health, engineering) and business management (accounting, management) from three UK universities (UCL, Reading, Bath) at different stages (beginning, middle, end) of their postgraduate programme. The findings also draw reference from a questionnaire of 120 Chinese international students at the beginning of their master's programme and a questionnaire of the 19 interviewees at the end of their study abroad journeys, to complement the data from the interviews.

According to studies (e.g. Killick, 2011; Lilley, 2013; Streitwieser & Light, 2016; Blum & Bourn, 2019) on GC in international higher education, becoming global citizens or developing GC is a popular aim and likely outcome of international mobility promoted by universities and educational agencies with increasing demand from students and employers. However, there is hardly any exploration as to how Chinese international students relate their study abroad experience to GC. While many researchers (e.g. Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; McGowan, 2017; Yang et al, 2020) have conducted extensive studies on Chinese international students' study abroad experiences, the potential of developing GC through international mobility has not yet appeared as a topic in their investigation and discussion. Therefore, the findings from this research will fill the

knowledge gap of understanding the link between Chinese international students' experiences and their GC development through presenting students' narratives and reflections on their own stories.

My main research question is "how do study abroad experiences influence Chinese students' perception of being global citizens" with four subsidiary questions. The findings from this chapter aim to provide sufficient evidence for all four research questions, followed by the next discussion chapter which interprets the findings with reviewed literature in the light of Transformative Learning Theory and three lenses of GC. The four questions serve as main themes to present the motivation, experience, change of values on GC and improvement of global skills:

Q1: To what extent do Chinese students consider becoming a global citizen as a motivation to study abroad?

Q2: What experiences trigger and facilitate students' learning towards becoming global citizens? To what extent are these experiences transformative?

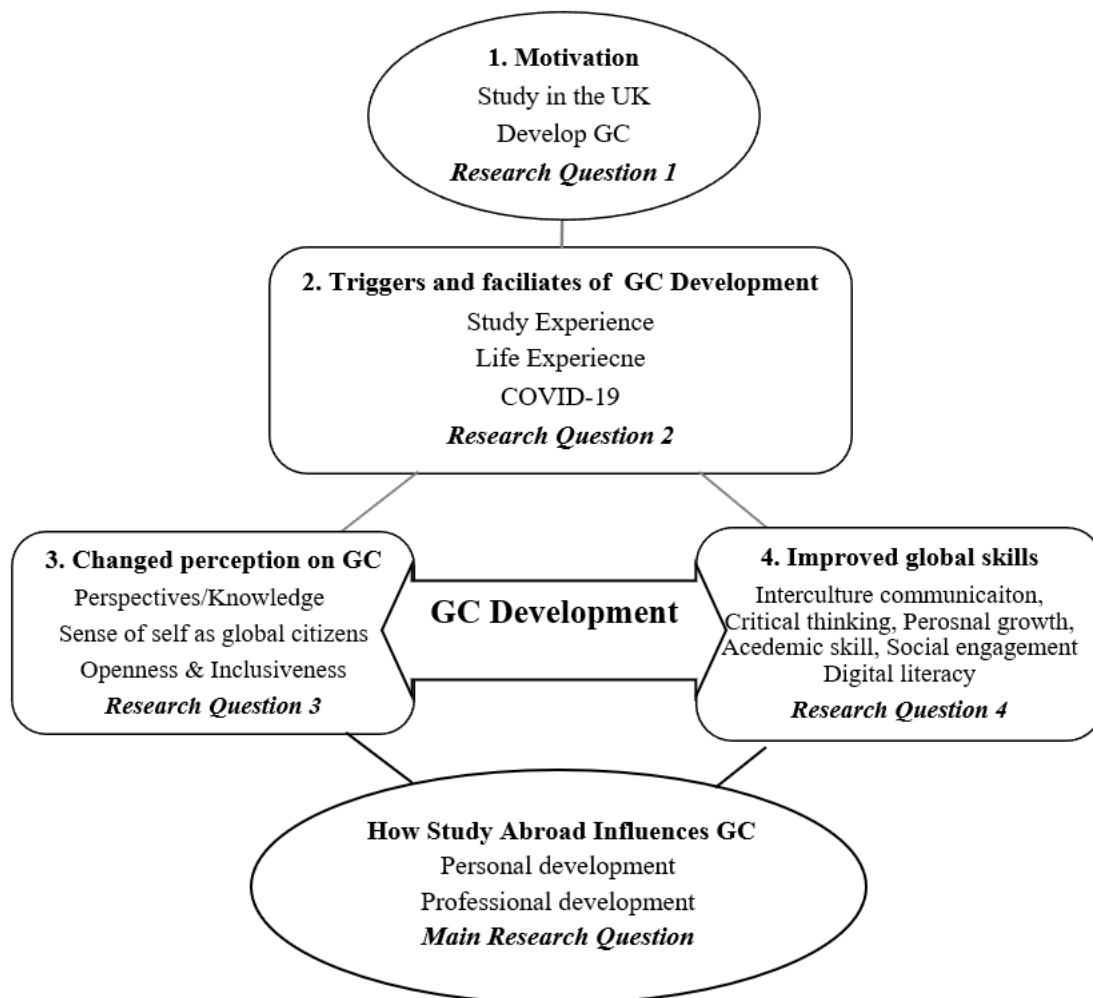
Q3: What are the changes in students' perceptions of GC through study abroad?

Q4: What are the perceived global skills students develop through study abroad?

The findings reveal the various perspectives of GC and experiences of becoming global citizens from Chinese students' unique approaches, which are distinct from the prevailing Western sense of GC and previous literature on GC and study abroad. All 19 students who participated in the three sets of interviews demonstrated the changing process of their interpretation on GC, developing global citizen attributes, an understanding of globalisation and improvement on global skills from October 2019 to July 2020. It should also be noted that the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic in the middle of the students' postgraduate study programme had a profound impact on most Chinese students' overseas journeys and inevitably influenced their perception of GC. Although confronting some emotional frustration and inconvenience of travel, all students claimed that the pandemic deepened their understanding of globalisation and accelerated the changing process of how they sense themselves in the interconnected world. The findings demonstrate both positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 on students' international mobility experiences and their reflections on GC during this very special period.

Based on the conceptual framework of GC in the literature review and the results from the interviews, there are five main categories of data from the findings implying the key themes in the process of students' GC development: 1) students' motivation of study in the UK and its relation to GC at the beginning of their study abroad journey; 2) students' study and life experience which triggered and impacted their GC development throughout their master's programme; 3) students' changing perceptions and values on GC at different stages of their programme; 4) students' improvement on global skills during their programme; 5) students' perceived overall influence of study abroad and GC development in their future career and personal development. Figure 5.1 demonstrates how the main themes with their sub-themes integrate with each research question to present a holistic picture of the research findings:

**Figure 5. 1The Main Themes of Findings in the GC Development Process**








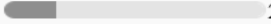
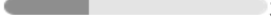
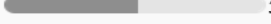
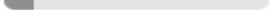
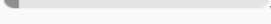
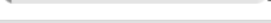
The following sections present the findings in the sequence of the five main themes corresponding to each research question. A finding statement is generated for each theme at the end of every section.

### 5.1. GC as a motivation for study abroad (Q1)

At the beginning of exploring students' study abroad experiences, this section sets out to investigate the reasons behind students' decisions on international mobility to provide insights for the first research question: in which ways do Chinese students consider developing GC as a motivation for study abroad? The findings briefly analyse Chinese international students' general intention of pursuing a master's degree in the UK and the reasons why students chose to study in a specific university and on a specific course, followed by an evaluation on how students' motivations relate to GC development. Data from this section is generated from the first round of interviews with 19 participants and a questionnaire of 120 Chinese international students at the beginning of their postgraduate programme in September 2019.

To have a general understanding of Chinese students' motivation of study abroad, my initial questionnaire asked the 120 respondents to select the three top reasons why they choose to study abroad. Table 5.1 displays the answers of this essential question, which served as vital guidance for designing further interview questions.

**Table 5. 1 Main Reasons of Chinese Students' Overseas Study**

Motivation of Study Abroad	Votes	Proportion
Improve English skills	55	 45.83%
For better quality education	71	 59.17%
Gain a valuable certificate for a better career	82	 68.33%
Explore the world by international travelling	25	 20.83%
Understand different cultures	39	 32.5%
Cultivate a global outlook	62	 51.67%
Meet your parents or friends' expectation	14	 11.67%
Hope to work or immigrate abroad after studying	7	 5.83%
Other	5	 4.17%
Total Respondents	120	

From the students' responses, the top three reasons for Chinese students study abroad are related to enhancing employability, enjoying better quality education and gaining a global outlook. The first two reasons have been widely recognised in previous studies (e.g. Hu, 2017; Tran, Blackmore & Rahimi, 2021) on Chinese students' international mobility. However, the findings of gaining a global outlook as a main reason for Chinese international students' overseas study provides evidence for my further investigation as to how students perceive global outlook and its relation to GC. The following sections present an in-depth exploration of students' rationales of choosing their specific programmes and how developing GC fitted into their expectation.

### **5.1.1 Why Chinese students study in the UK**

The Push-Pull model (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), which considers factors that influence the decision of international students to study overseas, is applied initially to categorise Chinese students' various motivations. This model is discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of the literature review on motivations for international mobility. The results of the first sets of interviews provide rich evidence for both push and pull factors' impact on students' motivation. While all students shared similar push factors associated with their dissatisfaction with China's higher education system and pressures on competition in the job market, each student demonstrated different pull factors, such as their desire to understand Western society, experience British culture, improve their understanding of the English language, gain a global outlook, make sense of the globalised world and so on. Thus, the findings indicate that there exist a number of pull factors closely related to the students' intention of developing GC, either explicitly or implicitly.

#### The push factors

All 19 students shared similar push factors, such as "confronting the stress of China's society" and "facing fierce competition in China's higher education system and job market". 15 out of the 19 students stated at the beginning of the first interview that they felt "frustrated" about getting an ideal job in China and believed gaining a master's

degree from a prestige Western university will increase their competitiveness in the job market:

“In fact, it is a kind of social pressure. In current China’s society, having an undergraduate degree is not enough. Unless you are a top student at the best universities in China, you can’t find a good job with a bachelor’s degree. I wasn’t a top student, but I want a good job. So, I need a master’s degree from a distinguished university abroad”. (S1)

Just like Student 1, many students explained how stressful and competitive China’s job market is for a university graduate without a master’s degree from a highly recognisable university. Moreover, some students also addressed that passing the entrance exam of postgraduate study was “a very hard and time-consuming process”:

“Taking the postgraduate entrance exam in China is too much pressure for me. Without preparation for rigorous exams, applying for a master’s programme is a relatively easy process to increase my competitiveness in the workplace in the future”. (S11)

“My parents said it’s very important for women to finish study at a young age in order to have a family soon. There’s social pressure for females in China. The UK’s one-year postgraduate programme is very suitable for girls who don’t want to spend too long to get a master’s degree in China”. (S18)

Clearly, many students, especially females, took pursuing a master’s degree in the UK as a way to fulfil their family responsibility.

Apart from the pressure of finding a decent job in China and saving time to obtain qualification, career advancement was also viewed as a challenge for young professionals. Some five out of the 19 students who participated in the interview process had around five years’ work experience before coming to the UK and felt the pressure at their workplace:

“I felt being at the bottleneck of my teaching job in China. I was very frustrated and couldn’t make any improvement... Going abroad appeared as a solution for the stagnant of my career development”. (S4)

The participants in the interviews unanimously expressed concerns about the difficulties to either have a good career or reduce social pressure in China. These difficulties constituted a major push factor recognised by both students and their

parents in their decision to study abroad. The push factors reflect how China's young generation perceives China's competitive job market, limited educational resources and social norms.

### The pull factors

With obvious push factors on one hand, on the other, there were many pull factors which attract students to study abroad. The British education system and culture were viewed as "very attractive" by all students. Most (15 out of 19) students claimed that the most attractive aspect of the British education system is its "short one-year master's programme". According to the results of the questionnaire of 120 students and 19 interviewees' own accounts, the most rated pull-factor is the time efficiency in terms of the length of a master's course in the UK compared to China and other English-speaking countries, including the USA and Australia. The time taken or "saved" for finishing a taught postgraduate degree in the UK was the primary reason given by interviewees:

"Because I will carry on doing a PhD, one-year master's programme provides me a fast-track to be qualified to apply for further PhD study". (S5)

"The most important thing is the study here is just a year. It's a shortcut for me to get a master's degree then start working. I don't want to waste time". (S18)

As can be seen from the above quotations, the postgraduate programme in the UK was viewed as a "shortcut" or "fast-track" for students to gain competitiveness in the job market or save time for further academic advancement.

Meanwhile, students also realised this "shortcut" is backed by their family's financial support. As Students 6, 7, 10 and 11 stated that their family has the "economic capability" to support them is the precondition for them to decide to go abroad. For instance:

"Firstly, my family has the (economic) condition for me to study abroad. They are very happy to provide me full support. I made them proud by studying in a world-class university". (S7)

Student 7 added that his family not only provided him with financial support but also "positive influence" to pursue international mobility:

“My father, who’s an English teacher, was a visiting scholar in a British university before. He knows the UK very well. Under his influence and support, I travelled to many Western countries and choose the UK as my study abroad destination without any doubt”. (S7)

Similarly, Students 6 and 12 also related their motives to study abroad to their family’s previous international experiences. In this sense, family’s socio-economic conditions and international mobility experience play an important role in students’ decisions on overseas study.

It is also notable that not all students are getting financial support from their family. Students 17 and 19, who had years of working experience, spend their own savings to pay for the tuition fees, as they see themselves as “mature enough” to be financially independent from their parents. Student 5 received the Chevening Scholarship from Chinese government, which covered all her tuition fees and daily expense in the UK. However, regardless of the source of finance, all students identified themselves as “middle-class” in China in terms of their socio-economic status. Adequate economic conditions served as the foundation of all pull factors for students to consider study abroad as “an available and attraction option” for their personal development.

### **5.1.2 The choice of university and course**

When asked the reasons behind their choice of university and course, students from the three universities gave very different answers. All students at UCL emphasised their interest on the reputation and global ranking of the university, while others at Bath and Reading provided various reasons such as easy application process, agents’ recommendation, previous travel experience and good geographic locations. For instance, Students 1, 4 and 7 expressed their strong desire on getting into a “top” university:

“In order to get into UCL, I applied for an unpopular master’s course to increase the chancing of getting an offer. I really care about studying in a globally recognised university, even if that meant I might change my major and study something I don’t like”. (S1)

“You know we Chinese tend to have some kind of vanity about reputation and privilege. Studying at one of the top 10 universities in the world makes me feel satisfied and somehow proud”. (S7)

While all students from UCL showed their strong intention to study at a “world renowned” university and highly valued “the outstanding global ranking of UCL”, students from the other two universities provided different reasons for choosing their specific university. Eight out of 10 students from Reading and Bath claimed they made the choice of university and course based on their educational agent’s advice. For instance:

“I decided to go to the UK but not sure which university and course to study. I accepted my agent’s recommendation, because the ranking of the university and major seemed good enough”. (S15)

Apparently, international education agents were playing important roles in helping students decide which university and course to study and made the application on the behalf of students. The students explained the main reason why they relied on agents is that they are not familiar with the UK’s education system and agents can give them appropriate advice. Interestingly, as some students mentioned, the international education agents are advocates of a “global outlook” and “international citizen”:

“There were so many educational agents telling me study abroad experience can enhance my global outlook... Even I wasn’t sure what it is, I did get convinced that improving global outlook is important for my future”. (S11)

“My agent helped me to write a personal statement which said becoming an international citizen is my goal of coming to the UK... It sounds like a good reason”. (S18)

“Before coming to the UK, I worked in an international education company. Cultivating global citizens is a main object of our educational programmes for students who prepare to study abroad”. (S17)

It is unclear how the international education agents in China perceived GC and why they were likely to quote “improving global outlook” as an outcome of overseas study. In any case, the agents who were trusted as professional education advisors by the students seemed to promote GC as a valuable asset to gain through international education.

### **5.1.3 Motivations related to GC**

Apart from the above common push-pull factors, each student had some specific reasons and visions for international mobility. Each participant demonstrated some

motives closely related to GC. Table 5.1 summarises the top five factors related to GC most quoted by the interviewees:

**Table 5. 2 Motivations related to GC development**

Motivation related to GC	Students	Example Quotes
Gain advantage in job market internationally	19 out of 19	"I want to work for international companies no matter in China or not. These companies only employ overseas returnees..." (S1)
Explore the world and experience Western culture	15 out of 19	"Without studying and living in the UK, I will never have a chance and time to travel around Europe freely" (S5)
Improve English skills	14 out of 19	"English skill is essential in today's China. Study in the UK is the best way to learn proper English" (S7)
Have a global outlook	11 out of 19	"The value of international mobility is to gain global outlook from first-hand experience, instead just reading books and surfing the internet to know the world". (S13)
Learn critical thinking	9 out of 19	"Western education emphasises independent thinking and learning. In this way, I will be provided more opportunity to practise critical thinking". (S2)

### Gain advantage in job market internationally

Most interviewees tended to believe study experience in the UK leads to better employment prospects, because the higher education system in the UK is "highly recognised and valued in China". As a result, British education is not only preferred but also viewed as an essential tool of social and international mobility for those Chinese elites. Because Western education and work experience are associated with "higher wages" and "better social status" in China, 17 out of 19 students said they hoped to get some work experience in the UK during or after their master's programme:

"I hope to find a job in London soon to gain some international work experience to make myself more competitive". (S1)

"I want to be an international elite who has the capability to work and live in different countries. I think my experience in the UK will help". (S14)

For those students, studying abroad is seen as a strategic vehicle for increasing personal competitiveness in the globalised world. It becomes clear that the main goals and priorities of most Chinese international students is to gain the qualification to be identified as “international elite” in the job market. In this sense, the neoliberal value of international mobility appears to be the main drive for Chinese students’ decision on whether to study abroad.

### Explore the world and experience Western culture

All students showed an understanding that China is only one part of the wider world, and they were “curious to explore” many different cultures outside China. For instance, Student 15 clarified his personal interest on “Western things” since his childhood:

“I’m always a fan of Western things – films, sports and music. I want to really experience the lifestyle in person, not only from books and movies”. (S15)

Indeed, just like Student 15, many students claimed their strong interest in Western culture since early years in China paved the way for them to pursue study and living in the UK.

Student 2 considered “explore the world outside China” through international mobility to not only be her own desire, but also the unrealised dream of her parents:

“Exploring the world outside China was also my parents’ dream, but they never had a chance to travel abroad due to various constraints in their generation. With the opportunity of studying abroad, I can see the world and realise my parents’ dream. By sharing the photos and videos I make in this journey, I feel I’m taking them to see the world”. (S2)

Student 2, who is the only person in her family who had the chance to travel outside China, cherished this valuable opportunity and believed her overseas experience could also contribute to her parents’ worldviews. In this sense, studying abroad not only adds to students’ own international experience, but also influences their families’ understanding of the world outside China.

In contrast to Students 2, 15, 17, 18 and 19, who had not travelled abroad before coming to the UK, some students (S1, S4, S6, S7, S9, S11, S12, S14) who had travel



or short-term study experience abroad before starting their master's programme attributed their motivation of international mobility to "more desire and curiosity to intensively explore the western world after previous short international travel experience". For example:

"I travelled to the USA before and hoped to explore other English-speaking countries. I think my experience in the UK will give me new ideas and feelings of what the world like." (S9)

It is interesting to note that all students viewed "exploring the outside world" as travelling to western countries or English-speaking countries. It seems that for most Chinese international students, the world outside China is mainly countries such as the USA, the UK and other European countries. Western society and culture are viewed as "more developed" by most interviewees.

#### Have a global outlook

The results from the questionnaire of 120 Chinese international students showed that 51.6 percent of respondents confirmed "gaining a global outlook" as one of their top three motivations of international mobility. In accordance with this result, 11 out of the 19 interviewees mentioned "having an international/global outlook" as one of their expected outcomes of overseas study. Student 13 valued gaining a global outlook as her priority for her one-year overseas study:

"I already have a stable job, family and child in China. It is a big decision for me to leave my work and family to live abroad. If I only want a master's degree, I can easily do a part-time postgraduate programme in China. What I really want is an international outlook and global mindset to change my lifestyle and thinking style!" (S13)

For Student 13, international mobility had nothing to do with gaining qualifications and knowledge, as she could "learn any knowledge in China". Similarly, Students 4, 14 and 19 also regarded gaining a global outlook as a unique feature of international mobility for them. For instance:

"My main drive of going abroad is to extend my horizon and vision of the world. As an English teacher, I believe my extended worldview can inspire my students to spend more time on learning English. I think the global outlook I gained from the overseas study can significantly improve my teaching quality". (S19)

It is worth mentioning that Chinese students tend to use “widening horizon” and “extend vision” to describe their desire to understand the world outside China. These expressions are closely linked to their intention to gain a global outlook.

To sum up, the one-year master’s programme in the UK not only offers students a “fast-track” or “shortcut” for a “globally renowned degree” to compete in the job market internationally, but also serves as a “once in a life time” opportunity to truly experience the lifestyle and education system in the UK. Although most students already had and will have more international travel experience, this one-year programme was likely to become their longest and most immersive time spending outside China. All students wanted to take that valuable opportunity to deepen their understanding of the world in many different ways, even if “the world outside” only meant Western countries for them. Regardless of the students’ major and career plan, their motivation and expectations of studying in the UK are not limited to the educational purpose and career development. As the findings reveal, elements related to GC, included being able to work in an international company, exploring the world, understanding Western culture, improving English, gaining a global outlook and learning critical thinking, are remarkable motivations of international mobility recognised by all students, some of their parents and many international education agents in China. With the understanding of the students’ motivation in relation to GC at the beginning of their study abroad journey, the next section presents the students’ experiences during their journey and highlights the triggers which facilitated students’ GC development.

## **5.2. The triggers and experiences of GC development (Q2)**

This section serves as evidence of students’ transformative experiences for GC development to answer the second research question: how do study abroad experiences trigger and impact students’ GC development? All the findings on students’ study abroad experiences in the UK were provided by the 19 interviewees during the three sets of interviews. The results of interviews revealed that the student’s study and life experiences in the UK were firmly interwoven with their motivation of international mobility and perceptions on GC. The first interviews started at the end of October 2019 when all the students had just started their master’s programme. The

second-round interviews were conducted in March 2020 in the middle of their one-year master's programme. The third-round interviews took place just after the respondents finished all their classes in June 2020 so that they had a fresh and comprehensive idea of their experiences. The outbreak of COVID-19 at the end of March 2020 and the consequential lockdown in the UK had enormously impacted on students' study and mobility experiences during the last six months of their master's programme. The study abroad experiences amid a global pandemic had both positive and negative influences on students' GC development. Section 4.3 will discuss the pandemic's impact on students' GC in detail.

Although the 19 interviewees were a diverse group (in terms of gender, major, age, hometown, see Appendix IV. Interviewees' Demographic Form) of international students from mainland China with different personalities and life histories, they all appeared well-prepared for their life abroad. They have lived their lives during China's period of Opening Up and economic blooming in the era of globalisation. All of them had already been exposed to Western culture through English learning, modern technologies, news media, movies, books, consuming Western goods etc. Moreover, most students (15 out of 19) had real physical contact with Western culture through international travel or short-term study abroad experiences before coming to the UK. Therefore, most students didn't feel massive "culture shock" and unexpected challenges when they arrived at their universities.

During the three sets of interviews, all students shared their experiences, which related to elements of GC and global skills. Apart from the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, all 19 students reported having some sort of study and life experience that significantly triggered their GC development and personal growth, especially during the first six months of their journey in the UK. It is also noticeable that there are a number of variables that might contribute to the differences in students' paths to GC, such as major, gender, personal interests, living environment, lifestyle in the UK and involvement in social activities. Table 5.3 summarises each student's specific experience of GC development and their own reflection on the outcomes:

**Table 5. 3 Students' experiences related to GC**

Student	Experience of GC development	Reflection on GC Development
S1	Joined the LGBT society and attended its events at his university; Attended career fairs and got a job offer from a multinational company in China.	Felt inclusiveness and freedom of speech in a diverse group; Achieved career goal.
S2	Built up a meaningful friendship with a local English lady through volunteering work; Had Christmas dinner with an English family; Joined a marketing society for international charities; Visited museums and art galleries in London.	Deepened her understanding of intercultural communication; gained friendship beyond age and nationality.
S3	Had a part-time job at a Chinese medicine shop in the centre London; Travelled around the UK; Studied different national health systems and WHO through her course.	Learnt how foreigners perceive Chinese culture and Chinese medicine; Gained knowledge about global health system.
S4	Took a module named Teaching Controversial issues; Attended Global Citizenship Programme; Travelled to Iceland with other Chinese students. MA dissertation research on Chinese students' citizenship education.	Learnt critical thinking on global issues; Experienced international travel; Explored English literature on citizenship education.
S5	Lived with a local English family as homestay; Participated in fundraising for charities; Took part in the Energy Saving Contest; Christmas party with classmates; Volunteered at the COVID-19 students' test centre.	Experienced British family culture; Learnt the importance of charity work; Gained awareness of green energy; Helped other students during the pandemic.
S6	Team-worked with classmates from different countries.	Learnt different learning and thinking styles
S7	Joined an organisation to teach the Chinese language and served as "a Chinese culture ambassador"; Joined International Relationship Society; Enjoyed going to pubs with classmates; Went to many theatres and museums.	Gained cultural awareness and friendship; Promoted Chinese language and culture in London; Shifted his view on Western people and culture.
S8	Travelled with Dutch students and learnt some Dutch; Majored in International Development; Visited different museums.	Experienced different cultures and learn foreign languages; Built theatrical understanding of GC; Learnt what is international development.
S9	Travelled around Europe with other international students; Learnt about other education systems from classmates; Took an online course about global health issues.	Explored different places and gained international friendships; Improved online learning skills.

S10	Part-time job as a waitress in local pubs; Participated in Model United Nations; Volunteered to teach Chinese calligraphy in a museum; Friendship and partied with other international students; Watched a play at Shakespeare's Globe; Joined her university's Global Citizenship Programme.	Work experience in the UK. Experienced different culture and found passion in Latin culture.
S11	Shared accommodation with British students; Tried to apply for jobs in the UK; Enjoyed going to pub with mates.	Learnt the employment rules in the UK; Enjoyed British drinking culture.
S12	Attended a local church weekly; Watched YouTube daily to learn global history and religions; Invited foreign students to celebrate Chinese New Year.	Found passion on religions; Gained knowledge not accessible in China; Introduced Chinese culture to international students.
S13	Attended many events hosted by the official Chevening Scholarship association; Joined local church community; Regular use of social media (LinkedIn) to make new connections.	Extended network with other international professionals.
S14	Joined a sports society; Met a British boyfriend; Participated in Student Union movements; Witnessed BLM protest in a park.	Impressed by social activism; Built up friends circle in the UK; Decided to stay in the UK after graduation.
S15	Attended International Student Café weekly; Attended local church weekly; Travelled to different cities in the UK.	Learnt different cultures from international students and church members.
S16	Attended lectures on global citizenship; Celebrated Thanksgiving with classmates.	Learnt global citizenship from other people's narratives.
S17	Part-time job at KFC; MA dissertation research on international schools in China and interviewed school leaders on global citizenship from Chinese perspective.	Learnt to work in a multicultural environment. Comparatively studied different schools' value on global outlook.
S18	Kept in contact with personal tutor by email; Went to church once, but not interested.	Felt a sense of belonging to her university.
S19	Travelled around the UK; Chatted with local people; shared her experience with her pupils in China.	Learnt different perspectives on global issues.

Table 5.3 demonstrates that each student had some unique experience linked to GC development. These experiences served as triggers and facilitators for the change of students' perceptions on GC. In general, the GC development took place either as

pedagogy experience during students' formal learning process provided directly by their universities or as out-of-class activities that occurred in their daily life. The following sections investigate these two types of experience respectively based on students' narratives from all the three rounds of interviews to understand how GC development took place.

### **5.2.1 The study experience**

Table 5.3 shows that many students considered their experiences in the classes, communication with tutors and doing coursework as being related to gaining GC. For those students their teaching staff, course contents and teamwork with classmates provided them with valuable opportunities to discuss global issues, exchange ideas with people from different backgrounds, improve English communication skills and inspire further research related to GC. Moreover, many students whose subject related to English language study (S2, S7, S12, S15, S18, S19), international education (S4, S8, S9, S16, S17), global health (S3, S5) and international business (S11, S13, S14) found the contents of their courses were related to GC in terms of gaining knowledge applicable worldwide. The section below provides details of how different types of learning experiences triggered the students' GC development.

#### Discussion and teamwork in class

Many students claimed that, due to the diversity of their classmates and the content of their course, they had learnt a lot about global issues and knowledge of different systems through class discussion. For instance, Student 3, who majored in Population Health, said she learnt the importance of GC in her curriculum regarding "how different countries should cooperate internationally to tackle global health problems such as infectable disease". Students 7, 12 and 19, who majored in TESOL, explained most of their courses' contents were related to GC in terms of how to communicate and teach English to people from different cultural backgrounds. These students believed that the postgraduate course itself was meant to provide them with a global outlook so that they could be better English language teachers in China; Student 6, who majored in Mechanical Engineering, reported that through teamwork with his classmates from six

countries, he understood the different thinking styles and perspectives of different cultures and education systems.

Some students claimed that they attended some lectures and seminars specifically for GC development. Student 8 said her main module of International Development taught her lessons about global citizenship education in Europe and UNESCO's framework of GC; Student 16 recalled a public lecture about GC in which she heard a few students from Africa present the issue of social inequality and the problem of international aid in the Global South; Student 4 claimed her worldview was "totally shifted" through learning the module "Teaching Controversial Issues":

"In the class, we discussed some weird topics such as should humans eat meat, do citizens belong to their countries and why we need governments... Those topics never existed in China. My classmates provided completely different approaches to these topics. They challenged my assumptions of the world and humankind". (S4)

As Student 4 reflected, through taking this module she started to contemplate some foundational issues of human nature and the world's political system. She said her worldview, which was formed by past education and experience in China, was "collapsed and rebuilt through the collision of ideas" in her classes. The similar "mind shifting experience" also happened to Student 8 during discussions with her African classmate:

"I was totally shocked when my classmate told me textbooks in his country are still written by the British and there is still an anti-colonialism movement in Africa. I always thought the age of colonialism had finished a long time ago". (S8)

These students claimed that some global knowledge they learnt from class discussion were "surprising facts that never appeared in textbooks in China" and this knowledge extended their global outlook. Indeed, many students admitted that their various learning experience in the classes "opened their mind" and even challenged their previous assumptions on "what the world is". Furthermore, half of the students (S2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19) claimed the concepts such as global outlook, international development, global organisations, international education etc, had been topics in their curriculum, reading material and coursework, so that they gained some knowledge related to GC through their formal learning.

### Communication with tutors

Regardless of their universities and courses, some students (9 out of 19) highlighted that their personal tutors and supervisors played a significant role in helping them adjust to the British education system and offered them emotional comfort. Students 3, 7, 8, 9 and 18 praised highly the support from their personal tutors and considered their communication with tutors as remarkable experiences that facilitated their GC development. For example, Student 3 recalled how “nice and friendly” her supervisor was that whenever she had any difficulties with her coursework, he always patiently replied to her email with helpful information and kind words. In this way, she always felt she was “being looked after” and “not alone” since she arrived in the UK; Student 18 described her personal tutor as “the only foreigner” she ever kept in touch with and appreciated his “patience and care” on helping her cope with emotional stress in daily life. Indeed, as these students demonstrated, the support from their tutors not only benefited their academic performance, but also gave them “a sense of belonging” and “emotional connection” to their universities as an international community.

Apart from communication with tutors, some students claimed their lecturers had positive influences on their global outlook and mindset. Student 18 highlighted that in her class a British lecturer who had taught in different countries, including China, inspired her as a “role model of global citizen”:

“His classes were inspiring. He has extensive knowledge and experience of different cultures to share with us. He understands we Chinese students very well because he had 10 years teaching experience in China! He is truly a global citizen who cultivated global outlook to students all around the world”. (S18)

Indeed, many students viewed their teachers not only as a source of knowledge, but also as examples of global citizens who have international knowledge and experience.

From the students’ descriptions of their pedagogy experiences in relation to GC, class discussions and communication with tutors were the two main activities that triggered their GC development. All students agreed that their study experiences significantly facilitated their development of a global outlook, intercultural communication, understanding of globalisation, knowledge of other countries and global organisations, critical thinking skills, English language skills and so on, which are essential elements



of GC. The next section discusses how informal out-of-class experiences facilitated the students' GC development.

### **5.2.2 The life experience**

As seen from Table 4.2, most GC development experiences reported by the students took place out-of-class. Most students (17 out of 19) reported their self-directed efforts on participating in students' societies, volunteer work, part-time jobs, promoting Chinese culture, attending local church and international tourism. Many students (14 out of 19) reported that some involuntary experience such as witnessing protests and encountering their flatmates had triggered their GC development during their daily life in the UK.

#### Social engagement

As indicated in Table 5.3, apart from Students 6 and 18 (who said they were not interested in out-of-class social activities), all students provided rich narratives of their experiences in different forms of social engagement. Students reported that most of their out-of-class activities, such as joining in student societies, participating in volunteering work and attending local church services, were provided by their universities' student services. Section 5.4 of global skills will explore the students' participation in formal social engagement such as volunteering work and attending students' unions in detail.

Apart from the abovementioned formal social engagement activities, some students highlighted their casual experience of "British pub culture" and "party with other international students" as important facilitators of their GC development.

"I never go to bars or pubs in China, because I thought they are places for people to get drunk and wasted. Since I came to the UK, going to the pub became an important part of my social life. I made friends and practised English through drinking in pubs". (S7)

Similarly, Students 5, 10, 11 and 15 also reported going to pubs or partying with their classmates as factors that enhanced their global outlook and extended their social circle.

It is worth mentioning that as all social engagement experiences were either offered through each university's platform or happened within the students' geographic areas. The students appear to have different opportunities to develop their GC based on which university they are in. As shown in Table 5.3, half of the students who lived in Reading and Bath counted joining the local church community as a key experience in understanding cultural diversity and developing GC, while no student in London had contact with a church community. In contrast, most students in London considered their regular visits to museums and galleries as effective ways to gain a global outlook, while no students in Reading and Bath expressed their interest in going to a museum or other form of exhibition.

### Witness of social activism

Many students reported that the most "eye-opening" experiences happened when they saw protests. As publicly protesting for expressing opinions or advocating for social change is not allowed in China, students had never encountered such a form of social participation before. They felt "very surprised" and thought it was "unbelievable" to see and hear protesting around them. As Student 2 recalled the moments when she grasped GC were her witnessing environmental protection activism:

"The first day when I arrived at my university, I saw an exhibition stand for environmental protection in the middle of the courtyard. There were many students passionately promoting anti-pollution activities... Another day I saw a big group of people marching for protecting wild animals in centre London... I have been very impressed by these two events. I realised there are people seriously making effort to make this world a better place through protesting. That's what global citizens should do". (S2)

Student 2 explained that even though she had read articles and talked about environmental problems, she never thought there was anything she could do about it. Through watching protests in front of her, she realised the possibility of taking action to raise the public's awareness of global issues.

A few students mentioned that the global movement of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest in early June 2020 raised their awareness of social justice and human rights. Student 11 demonstrated that his indirect experience of BLM shifted his perception on social participation:

“I was so surprised that three of my British flatmates made a big effort to take part in the (BLM) protest. They got up early to take a train to London and spent the whole weekend for the protest... They are white, but they really care about equal rights for all ethnicities. That touched me”. (S11)

Similarly, Student 14 also expressed her feelings of being “impressed” when she witnessed the BLM protest in a park. These “eye open experiences” of witnessing protest significantly challenged students’ previous assumptions about “what is a good citizen” (S5) and “what is the right social order” (S8), as some students used to assume protesting is “a negative and antisocial activity which threatens the stability and peace of a society” (S7 and S11). Moreover, students sensed the possibility of social participation through the activism movement and “embodied democracy” in real life.

As a consequence of witnessing protest, several students said they were inspired by such activism and took part in some forms of protest such as signing petitions, writing letters to their university and taking part in street marches. For instance, Student 1, who joined the LGBT society, explained how he learnt about freedom of speech and social inclusion when he went to a festival protesting his “right of being different and himself”; Student 14 highlighted her experience of writing a letter to ask for the change of some words on her university’s website, because she considered those words to be “offensive to Chinese students”; A few students reported their participation of signing petitions to require refunds of their tuition fees or to extend their visa during COVID-19. Those students said that the outcomes of their protests were “very satisfying”, because they felt their “voices were heard” and “somehow contributed to social justice”.

### Promoting Chinese/Western Culture

Some students viewed the promotion of Chinese culture to foreigners as helping themselves and others to gain GC. Student 7 considered himself to be a “Chinese culture ambassador”, because he had volunteered to teach Chinese in local secondary schools and helped organise a Chinese speaking contest for British young learners. Similar to Student 7, Student 9 volunteered to teach Chinese calligraphy in a museum and Student 3 worked in a Chinese medicine shop. Student 15 felt more like a global citizen when sharing his understanding of Chinese customs with other international

students during weekly International Café events. As he recalled, “I felt I represent China in front of other international students. It’s my responsibility to let them know more about China”. Indeed, some Chinese students helped others to gain an understanding of Chinese culture. Those students emphasised promoting their own culture as an important contribution to a globalised society.

Opposite to promoting Chinese culture, Student 9 showed her passion for introducing the British lifestyle to Chinese students. She had started a Chinese blog site since arriving in the UK, which provided Chinese international students tips on how to “make the most of study abroad time to enjoy London”. She found that helping other Chinese students to adjust to life in the UK became her “mission as a global citizen”, because for her GC is about “sharing her global experience with Chinese peers”. In the same vein, Student 19, a primary English school teacher in China, claimed that “I’m not only a learner in the UK, but also a teacher of British culture to my pupils and a Chinese culture spreader to my international classmates”.

### Confronting difficulties

Although most students demonstrated the general feeling of being “comfortable and convenient” in their daily life, Students 10 and 18 reported some degree of “uncomfortableness” in the middle of their study:

“Because it’s my first time abroad, I felt very embarrassed and uncomfortable sometimes when I go out. I didn’t know how to make a payment in the supermarket; I always crossed the street from the wrong side. I still don’t know what to say when I meet foreigners... I think all of those inconveniences are because I don’t have a global mindset at all” (S18)

As time went on, Student 18 reported her improvement of confidence in daily life and all the “embarrassment” disappeared. She regarded her gradual adaption to the British lifestyle as a “process of a growing global mindset”. In contrast, Student 10 reflected on her experience of being a waitress in a British pub as having a global mindset couldn’t bring her a “privileged lifestyle and high social status” in the UK and being a global citizen doesn’t directly lead to “being respected”:

“I thought I miss China and felt homesick, but then I realised what I missed is the privileged lifestyle and high social status I had in China. I’m just an outsider in British society and don’t feel being respected at all when I was working as a waitress in a local pub..... No matter how much global outlook I have, I still feel the pain and uncomfortable as a low-class outsider”. (S10)

Unlike Student 18, whose “inconvenience” in a new environment can be fixed by global mindset, Student 10’s “pain and uncomfortableness” seemingly can’t be healed by having a global outlook at all. Ironically, Student 10’s intention of working as a part-time waitress was to “experience British culture” and “gain global outlook”. It turned out that this experience made her dislike the British culture of social classification and doubt her self-worth as an international student in a foreign society. Facing such difficulty of feeling lost in British society, Student 10 changed her interest in British culture to an interest in Latin culture and made friends with her South American flatmate. She viewed this as a positive change and realised having a global outlook is not limited to appreciating the culture of English-speaking countries.

Among all the difficulties students experienced, the language barrier was the primary challenge faced by every student at the beginning of their study abroad journey. However, with time passing, all students felt they overcame this difficulty and turned it into their improved global skills. Section 5.4.1 will discuss students’ improvement in the English language in detail. The outbreak of COVID-19 was perceived as the most difficult time in most students study abroad journey, which is explored in the next section.

### **5.2.3 COVID-19**

During the second and third rounds of interviews, most students mentioned that they felt vulnerable to racialism and cultural stereotypes, as well as feeling very insecure. Many students claimed that the different opinions on wearing facemasks in public places had become a “culture conflict” between Chinese international students and local Westerners. Student 10 had encountered a group of young men who laughed at her when she was wearing a facemask at the tube station outside her university in early March:

“One guy came in front of me and did some very loud fake coughing towards my facemask. His other friends were laughing... I didn’t know what to do. I was the only person with a facemask at the tube station. I knew I looked strange...” (S10)

Student 10 added that her other Chinese classmates had “much worse experiences” than her, who were spat on by some men on the tube for wearing a facemask. Moreover, Student 14 told her “very upset” story of being called “Chinese virus” by local British teenagers when she was jogging in a park. Even worse, the international media has reported multiple occasions in which Asian students and residents have faced prejudice or even violence in the UK while wearing face masks. Such mistreatment negatively affected the Chinese students’ impression of British society. These students expressed how being thrown into emotionally charged situations and facing misjudgement triggered their struggle in reflecting on their national identity as Chinese.

Reflecting on what he learnt from being mistreated, Student 7 quoted a Chinese proverb as “do not impose on others what yourself do not desire” which means similarly to ‘treat others as how you wanted to be treated’ as the Golden Rule in the Bible. He realised it was the deep feeling of disappointment when not being respected as Chinese international students which made him value the importance of respecting others. Many students who confronted “racialism” or “unfair treatment” tend to attribute this phenomenon to Westerners’ “low level of empathy” (S17), “lack of GC” (S14), “narrow-minded” (S11), “arrogance” (S7) and “not being global citizens at all” (S6). Students also reflected that the mistreatment they suffered made them realise how important GC is for everyone in the world:

“I feel we need more inclusiveness and mutual understanding in the world. The discrimination towards us Chinese is actually caused by misunderstanding and Westerners’ lack of global citizenship”. (S14)

“People should have more empathy on us Chinese. Being racist towards us when we are having difficulties means they don’t care about our feeling and experience. No matter how different we are, we are living in the same global community and facing the same problem”. (S17)

Since March 2020, most students reported their increasing confidence and trust in the Chinese government's measure on controlling COVID-19 in China compared with other countries. At the same time, students showed deep concern and uncertainty about the situation in the UK. Indeed, the experience of being a victim of discrimination due to some people's lack of cosmopolitan values and extreme nationalism evoked students' desire for others to have empathy. This type of empathy is closely linked to GC, which values an acceptance of people from different backgrounds.

At the end of their master's programmes in July 2020, when all students had solid plans of going back to China and were certain that they can obtain their degree on time, they tend to consider their experiences not as "disappointing and scary" but as "interesting and adventurous". For example, Student 4, who left London in June, shared her "thrilling" story on her journey back to China:

"When I got off the flight, I was sent to hospital straight way from the airport. Because the person who sat next to me on the plane tested positive (of COVID-19). I had to stay in a special hospital for one week until I passed all the tests. I was so scared that couldn't eat and sleep well during that time. Now I'm laughing at that experience! It made me strong somehow". (S4)

Just like Student 4, some other students also shared their stories in which they were uncertain and emotionally frustrated about their situation but eventually managed to stay healthy and safe. Student 19 joked that:

"I never expected my study abroad experience could be that dramatic! The anxious experience from lockdown, problem of my room renting contract and difficulty in buying a ticket to return to China made me feel like a hero who conquered all the strange obstacles and finally made it home" (S19)

Indeed, although all the students faced unexpected challenges and difficulties, they also gained confidence, resilience and adaptability during the pandemic. In the third interview in July 2020, half of the students had already returned China safely and the rest were still staying in the UK due to the limited availability of flight tickets. All participants carried on their postgraduate courses and studied at home without

retention. It can be seen that the crisis did not cause the students to quit their study process.

To sum up, the findings above illustrate that the Chinese students had both positive experiences and difficulties while staying in the UK. It is important to note that before their journey in the UK, the students were constantly exposed to and influenced by Western cultures and their products, such as movies, music, sports, and fashion trends. As a result, they had a fairly smooth transition and settled quickly in the UK. Most students said they did not feel any sense of “culture shock” but only “some minor difficulties” in their daily life living in the UK. The impressions of the UK were generally positive and satisfactory, besides the fact that some students faced mistreatment during the COVID-19 pandemic. All students had some unique experiences that contributed to their GC development through formal learning and out-of-class activities. Experiences such as class discussions, communication with tutors, encountering otherness, social engagement, witnessing protest and promoting Chinese/western cultures were highlighted as significant triggers to GC learning. The next two sections present the outcomes of the GC development experience in regard to students’ change of perceptions and improvement of skill.

### **5.3. Students’ changing perception of GC (Q3)**

After presenting students’ experiences which triggered their GC development, this section investigates students’ changing perceptions on GC, in terms of their understanding of GC, how they identify themselves as global citizens, their views on globalisation and attitudes towards GC.

To have a general understanding of how Chinese students perceive GC, I provided some popular definitions of GC that emerged from my literature review in the initial questionnaire of 120 students at the beginning of their study abroad. Table 5.4 displays the results:

#### **Table 5. 4 Which two definitions of ‘global citizen’ do students mostly agree with?**



Definition of Global Citizen	Votes	Proportion
someone who travels to many countries	10	8.33%
someone who understand different cultures	84	70%
someone who can speak different languages	32	26.67%
someone who works in an international company	12	10%
someone who cares about global issues	64	53.33%
someone who takes care of the environment of planet earth	33	27.5%
other	5	4.17%
Total Respondents	120	

It can be seen that the majority of students linked GC to understanding multiple cultures and global issues. Most Chinese students believe being a global citizen is about having a mindset aware of different cultures rather than international work and travel experience. My further interviews also confirmed that most students view GC through a cosmopolitan approach which emphasises intercultural communication and a sense of belonging to global society, as described in the literature review. However, during the interviews, many students addressed their view of being a global citizen far beyond culture awareness. The following section demonstrates how Chinese students perceive GC and themselves as global citizens and how their perceptions changed during their study abroad journey.

### 5.3.1 Perspectives/Knowledge on CG

This section explores the students' initial understanding of GC, which was generated from the first set of interviews, in order to compare with their new insights on GC at later stages of their study abroad journey. Although many students were not familiar with the exact term of 'global citizenship', they had some sort of consciousness related to GC and were able to give their own definitions as to what a global citizen is. Some students confirmed that they consider themselves as global citizens and the rest

agreed that they would like to gain some attributes of global citizenship through study abroad experience. During the first interviews, when asked about whether they had heard about the concept of global citizen or some related terms such as global outlook, most students (12 out of 19) responded that they had hardly heard about the term “global citizenship” but were familiar with “international outlook” from English textbooks (S1, S3, S7), reading materials (S2, S11), international conferences (S5, S13), media (S11, S14), work experience (S9, S10, S15, S17), short-term study abroad experiences (S8), study abroad agents (S11, S18, S17) and IELTS exams (S12, S19).

Moreover, it seemed that Chinese students prefer to use the term “international” than “global”. In particular, they tended to use “international outlook” all the time and “international citizenship” sometimes when I used the terms “global outlook” and “global citizenship” in the interview questions. The definitions of international and global appear to be rather vague in the students’ consciousness. Some students explained that this was due to the terms “international outlook”, “international education”, “international relationships”, “international trade” and “international company” being very commonly used in China, but they students had hardly heard any terms linked to “global”.

Students 7, 8 and 10 claimed they had some experience and knowledge related to GC during their past international experience. Student 7 indicated that he had sufficient knowledge and a rich experience of GC before coming to the UK through participating in Model United Nations during his undergraduate course in China and summer school in the USA, which was related to becoming international citizens.

“I never heard the term global citizenship in China, but I learnt it when I studied in a summer school in the USA. It seemed very popular in international study programmes in America, but no one talked about it in China”. (S8)

“When I was doing a volunteering teaching programme in Bali, I met some people working there from different parts of the world. They call themselves ‘global digital nomad’ or ‘global citizen’. So I learnt what is GC from them”. (S10)

Clearly, those three students had international mobility experience directly related to GC and already had some understanding of GC before coming to the UK. At the same

time, Student 9, 10, 15 and 17 also demonstrated their familiarity with GC and attributed their knowledge of GC to previous work or internship experience in China:

“The first time I learnt global citizenship was from my internship at an international kindergarten in Shanghai. There were many children from different countries. Cultivating global citizens is the kindergarten’s slogan”. (S9)

“I started to be very interested in global citizenship since my internship at an NGO in China. They organised lots of seminars about having a global citizen’s mindset for protecting animals and the environment, social justice and public health. I realised there are people who really care about global citizenship in China and most of them are overseas returnees”. (S10)

“I did an internship at an English language school last year. Its slogan is cultivating global outlook and mindset through learning English”. (S15)

“I’m very familiar with the concept of GC. When I worked for an international education company in China, we had some training course aiming for educating global citizens”. (S17)

It appeared that some international education institutions and NGOs in China highly value the significance of cultivating GC, because they are educating people who are from abroad (the kindergarten garden), going abroad (the language school and international course company) or coming back from abroad (the NGO). In this sense, the demand for GC in China seems to come from people who have had or are going to have international mobility experience.

It is worth mentioning that some students learnt about GC from Chinese media:

“I’m familiar with the concept of globalist which appeared often in media in recent years. Is it the same as global citizenship? I tend to be a globalist who is against nationalism and protectionism. I think nationality shouldn’t constrain individuals’ choice and decision”. (S11)

Student 11 reflected that some concepts related to GC, such as “globalist” and “nationalism”, had been increasingly appearing in Chinese media, which made him contemplate his own identity before coming to the UK. Similarly, Student 14 also expressed her own interpretation of GC through the influence of Chinese media:

“When I was a child, I heard a song about the concept of global village in a Chinese TV show. That was my first impression of global citizenship... My own interpretation of GC is something about we are

not limited to our nationality, ethnicity and language... The whole human race is a global tribe" (S14)

It appeared that without international travel or work experience, students had a chance to learn about GC from media in China. The knowledge of GC is accessible for all the students as long as they have some interest and sensitivity on the topic.

More than half of the interviewees claimed their understanding of globalisation and GC was influenced by the concept of "community of shared future for mankind", which has been the hallmark of China's approach to international relations and trade policy, as mentioned in the literature review. When asked about their views on globalisation during the first interviews, all students considered globalisation as a "good thing for the world" and had sensed its strong and positive impact on their daily life in China. Many students acknowledged that China's opening up in the globalisation process brought modernisation and enormous opportunities for people to do business and travel worldwide. However, in the second and third interviews during the pandemic, many students started to be sceptical about their previous "all good" assumption about globalisation. For example:

"As someone who works in the international trade industry in China, I always thanked globalisation for China's rapid economic development. But nowadays, I realised the opening of national borders can actually bring us disaster across countries". (S13)

As such, the findings demonstrate some clear changes in students' attitudes and understanding of globalisation during their study abroad journey. However, it can be argued that such change was triggered by the outbreak of COVID-19 and international mobility might not necessarily cause the students' critical reflection on the impact of globalisation.

While most interviewees demonstrated some degree of familiarity and interest in the concept of GC and globalisation, Students 12 and 18 showed their indifference:

"I haven't considered anything about global citizenship before. I lived in Shenzhen which is a cutting-edge and modernised city in China. I didn't want to travel anywhere outside the city and care about anything not close to me...I'm still young and I think making money is the most important thing for young people instead of caring for global issues.

Only when I had to pass IELTS exam to study abroad, I learnt something about globalisation to prepare for the writing task”. (S12)

“I studied English major in China. There was something like that globalisation in my textbook and IELTS exam, but I never paid attention nor think about it. If it’s not for the exam, I don’t care at all”. (S18)

It seemed that while the majority of (17 out of 19) students had some thoughts and understanding on GC, a small number didn’t have any interest in the topic as they didn’t see any link of GC to their daily life in China. However, at the end of her study in the UK, Student 12, who didn’t have any interest in globalisation and GC, claimed she had witnessed a significant change in her attitude and mindset. Through watching videos about world history and international policies on YouTube, this student reported her increasing interest and awareness about globalisation. Therefore, she found that her experience in the UK facilitated her understanding of GC. At the same time, only one student (S18) claimed she still felt indifferent about anything related to GC.

### 5.3.2 Sense of Being Global Citizens

To explore how study abroad programmes impact students’ perceptions of GC, all the interviewees provided their understanding of what a global citizen is and their sense of selves as global citizens according to their own definitions in the first interview. At the end of the students’ study abroad journey, they reflected on what change had occurred on their values of GC and presented new insights. Table 5.5 demonstrates the differences between students’ definitions on global citizens and the change that had happened to their sense of selves and GC:

**Table 5. 5 Students’ change of perception of GC and themselves as global citizens**

Student	Original perception	New insight
S1	I’m not privileged enough to be a global citizen, because my Chinese passport limited my ability to travel and work freely, and my cultural identity made it very difficult for me to build deep connections with people of other cultures. I don’t feel equal to other nationalities in terms of international mobility. I’m not	I have been focused on finding a job in an international company and I made it. I will have a chance for international business travel for my company. That’s global citizenship for me. I felt much less like a global citizen and do not want to stay in the UK for any

	interested in global social activism such as protecting the environment which I think global citizens are.	longer, because I don't find a sense of belonging here. I still think I'm not a global citizen, but I might become one in the future if I travel more.
S2	I'm a global citizen. I'm very interested in intercultural communication and my major of Translation Studies enabled me to read intensively on global issues.	Through my proactive effort on making friends and participating in charity work, I feel deeply connected with the UK's society. I really enjoy being a global citizen who spends time to learn other cultures and has many international friends!
S3	I'm not a global citizen. Global citizens are people working in large global organisations such as WHO and UN. I only aim to work in a national institution in China.	After returning China, I realised employers highly valued my study abroad experience and English skills. I felt I'm kind of a global citizen in China now with some advantages in the job market.
S4	I'm very interested in global citizenship, because I had some study on citizenship education in China.	Now I think I'm an 80% global citizen. I felt I have done well in terms of accepting other cultures. I will make more improvements.
S5	I do want to become a global citizen – someone who's making big contributions to mankind, like famous scientists. It's very hard. I still have a long way to go. I will make some effort on this.	I think I'm still not a global citizen. What I care about is mainly my own personal achievement not big global issues. I have done some volunteering work this year, but the more I do the more I felt I'm not doing enough. I have some more plans to develop GC next year.
S6	I never heard of global citizenship. I think I have global outlook because I have international travel experience and speak good English. I found western people racist and don't want to spend social time with them.	I am much more like a Chinese citizen than global citizen. Apart from studying and going to gym, I didn't have time to improve my GC through out-of-class activities. I have some qualities related to GC, but I don't feel like a global citizen, because I feel I don't have equal opportunity in western society.
S7	I'm sure I'm a global citizen with an open mind to all the cultures and respect diversity, but I'm still Chinese from my own standpoint.	I feel more confident being Chinese with a higher level of global awareness than most westerners. I found we Chinese international students are more like global citizens than the British.
S8	Becoming a global citizen is one of my goals. I'm still in the learning process. I'm trying to understand different cultures, but not proficient yet. I need more time.	I realised being a global citizen is not about achieving great things or being proficient on all the culture. It's about taking little action to understand and respect other cultures every day. I'm trying my best to become.

S9	I think I'm a global citizen, because I worked for an international school in Shanghai where they emphasised GC. I have also been to other western countries.	I felt I'm a global citizen for sure after this journey, because now I have confidence and skills to travel in different countries.
S11	I'm a global citizen in terms of openness. Unlike some nationalists, I'm not narrow-minded and regard my own culture as the most important one. I'm always curious to learn from others.	I realised a global citizen is also someone who truly understand his own culture. Through learning more about other cultures, I started to appreciate the beauty of Chinese tradition.
S12	I'm not a global citizen. I didn't care about GC. I was very satisfied living in a major city in China without the desire of seeing the outside world.	I'm still not a global citizen. I think global citizens must have lots of knowledge of the world regardless of travelling abroad. A global citizen can be made by reading books and watching YouTube in a small remote village.
S14	I naturally have a global citizen personality. I like to make friends with non-Chinese and enjoy western lifestyle. I'm improving my global outlook all the time. I think GC is very important for everyone to have.	I found the world is getting less globalised and more nationalism has appeared. Compared with most people no mater Chinese or Westerners, I have much more experience and a better attitude for GC. I'm a global citizen, but most people are not!
S15	I consider myself as a global citizen. It is not because I'm studying abroad. It is because I care about others' perceptions on global issues. I think nationalism and patriotism can hinder a country's long-term development.	I made big improvements in my global outlook. I used to get very angry and defensive when I read or heard any negative comments about China.
S17	I'm still going in the direction of being a global citizen. I can treat people from different cultures equally, but I can't get rid of my prejudices and stereotypes in some cultures.	I learnt the importance of empathy for global citizens. We must experience the world from the perspective of others. Tolerance and respect are not enough for GC, we also need to enjoy other cultures.
S18	I'm not a global citizen at all. I'm a very traditional person. I never care about global issues and don't understand other cultures. I never travelled abroad before.	I did improve my intercultural communication and life skills. But I'm still far from being a global citizen.
S19	I'm a global citizen. When I chatted with my family and friends in China, I found I care about issues on a global scale. I have a broader vision than people around me.	If I didn't come to the UK, I would be a satisfied person who thinks she understands the whole world. The more I know, the more I felt I need to learn about GC. I'm still working on becoming a better global citizen. I will educate my pupils in China to have global outlook.

When asked about students' own definitions of global citizens during the first round of interviews, each student identified a range of attributes which would be appropriate for a global citizen and which they appeared to value for themselves. It turned out that each student tended to define a global citizen through a certain or combination of lenses among neoliberalism, cosmopolitan and critical thinking. Data gathered from the 19 students in the first set of interviews suggests that they perceive global citizens as people who: 1) work for international companies in different countries (S1, S3, S6, S11, S19); 2) are open-minded, inclusive and accepting of other cultures in a respectful, tolerant and non-judgmental fashion (S4, S10, S18); 3) care about major events and global issues happening around the world; 4) have profound knowledge of different cultures (S12, S15); 5) are not nationalist (S14, S15); 7) think critically from different perspectives (S4, S7, S15); 8) are able to build and maintain connections with people of different backgrounds (S2, S10).

Moreover, some students also found that their sense of themselves as global citizens had changed from "optimism" to "more realistic" through their study abroad journey. For instance, in the first interview at the beginning of her study journey, Student 19 considered herself as a global citizen because she "cared and know much more about global issues" than her family and friends. At the end of her journey, she reflected that the more international experience she has, the more motivation she has to improve GC. In this sense, the study abroad experience can also influence students' motivation for life-long GC learning.

### **5.3.3 Global attitude of openness, respect and inclusiveness**

According to the literature, I define global attitude as students' pattern of feelings, opinions and responses to events and people around them in a globalised world, which reflects an orientation of openness towards diverse cultures, other people and different ways of behaving. When asked about the most valuable attribute of global citizenship they developed during their study abroad journey, most students (17 out of 19) addressed the attitude of "Bao Rong" (包容) which means openness, inclusiveness and tolerance in Chinese. Many students described their transformative experience from being "narrow-minded", "argumentative" and "judgemental" toward people with



different worldviews to being “open-minded and empathic”. According to the interviewees’ own accounts, all those transformative experiences happened unexpectedly through their encounters with “different others” around them or some “occasional discovery”.

At the beginning of their study in the UK, many students reflected that their attitude of openness was activated by sensing the “beauty and meaning of other ethnicities and cultures”. The students said they were surprised to see people from all cultures and ethnicities in every corner of where they study and visit, which was very different from China. Moreover, many public exhibitions dedicated to international art, world history and cultural heritage were wide open for them to explore. Students 2, 8 and 9, who enjoyed visiting museums, found the fascinating sides of other civilisations through their first-hand experiences. Student 9 described her “eye-opening” experience when she visited the British Museum and realised there existed many other civilisations as fascinating as that of China:

“I’ve never been that close to observing the ancient Egyptian heritage. I was so impressed by their mysterious faith... If I didn’t come to London, all I know about the world’s history is China’s civilisation. Now I realised there are so many other cultures as precious and significant as one another” (S9).

Like Student 9, who was amazed by her own discovery in London, many students pointed out that they had the chance to experience and appreciate other cultures as the stepping stone to understand the world outside China. Student 8 explained after witnessing and learning different cultures through attending exhibitions in London, she realised “all cultures deserve the same respect”. This view resonated with Students 2 and 4 who found “no culture is superior, no matter it’s Chinese, British or African”.

After living in the UK for a few months, many students interpreted the practice of openness and inclusiveness as a way of “mutual understanding and acceptance” between them and “others” such as their classmates and flatmates. They found that they became more “open minded” about the world and “letting go of their previous assumptions”. For instance, Student 8 didn’t get along with her Taiwanese flatmate

at first, because they disagreed on China's history and sovereignty. Eventually, after reaching mutual acceptance, they became good friends:

“I was silly that I tried to impose my strong political opinion to my Taiwanese flatmate even she didn't agree with me. We had an unpleasant argument and didn't speak with each other for days. I realised we have different assumptions about China's government based on our previous education... Until one day I asked her about fashion trends in Taiwan and she was happy to chat with me. We found lots of interests in common and became friends. We never talked about politics anymore”. (S8)

Like Student 8, Students 4, 10, 11 and 19 also reported their experiences of initial conflicts with their peers due to different political views and cultural norms. These conflicts brought them negative emotions of “anger and disappointment” at first. However, after they became aware that “everyone has different viewpoints shaped by one's specific education and social background”, they ceased arguing or debating with their peers. For example, Student 11 recalled that he was very “frustrated” when he was trying to debate China's system of socialism with his two British flatmates as they had different definitions of socialism. Once both sides acknowledged their different viewpoints and gave up “correcting each other”, they never had any conflicts since. Student 19, who also had similar experiences, reflected such change as “switching from trying to be a teacher of my own beliefs to a learner of other cultures”.

Some students claimed that thanks to confronting others with different cultures and worldviews, they learnt to truly accept everyone around them. Student 4 reflected that she used to only get along with people who shared the same worldview with her in China. Since she learnt to “respect others' differences” through discussions on conflicting issues such as wars and feminism with her classmates, she realised the possibility of “being friends with people who disagree with us”. In terms of respecting others regardless of disagreement, Student 12 shared a story of how she learnt to accept her classmates:

“I was very shocked when I saw my Greek and Arab classmates take their shoes off to sit more comfortably in the classroom. This could never happen in China! As a teacher myself, I would never allow my students to sit cross-legged without shoes in the class. I thought it is

very offensive and impolite... but now I totally accept this behaviour.  
(S12)

Similarly, Students 9, 12 and 17 also told stories about their initial “shocking” feeling when witnessing their peers’ “strange behaviours”, but gradually realised they were just different cultural norms and themselves “might also be viewed as acting oddly” from people who didn’t know Chinese culture. Indeed, many students found “there is no universally correct way to do things” after confronting other international students who behaved differently. The idea that “cultural differences aren’t positive or negative” gave the Chinese students the ability to connect with people from other cultures intellectually and emotionally. Some students emphasised that their attitude of inclusiveness started from “letting go of traditional views and stepping out of what is known”. Student 11 argued that active listening with a learning mindset had been the most valuable global skill he gained when getting along with his British flatmates. Some students viewed openness as an attitude to explore with the purpose of learning about a new culture through proactively looking for opportunities to step out of their own comfort zones.

A few students said they learnt tolerance when they faced misunderstanding from others, especially during the pandemic, while some realised a global citizen should not only have capacity to tolerate differences from others, but also “have the heart to enjoy and appreciate the diversity brought by others” (S8). Some students described how their minds and heart were open to appreciate and respect others. Student 15 claimed that his most significant improvement was becoming “not judgmental and offensive” when confronting people with different backgrounds, but trying to understand others’ situations and appreciating their true values in the global society. He gave a vivid example to demonstrate this:

“I had some bias on immigrants and refugees in Europe. I thought they are threats for the society and local people shouldn’t accept them... Until I watched a football game with a French flatmate, he told me more than half of the top football players in his country were descendants of African immigrants. I suddenly realised many immigrants are actually contributing to their host country and they deserve to be respected”.  
(S15)

From this unexpected and informal experience, Student 15 reflected that he suddenly started to open his heart to tolerate and respect others who were different from him, instead of “seeing others as threats because we don’t know their true value and potential in the global society”. He admitted that if he didn’t come to the UK and meet his French flatmate, he would always have prejudice on certain global issues, such as international immigration and racism. However, the experience he described transformed his attitude to a positive and open mindset. With the plan of being an English teacher back in China, he said he would definitely share this transformative experience with his students and “teach them to accept others to make the world a place of inclusiveness”.

#### **5.4. Students’ improvement on global skills (Q4)**




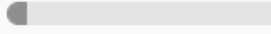
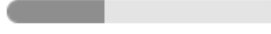
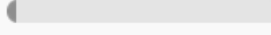
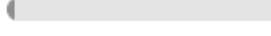
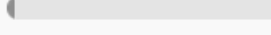
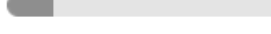
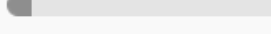
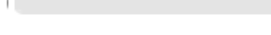
After the previous section’s analysis on students’ changing perceptions of GC on a value-based approach, this part of the findings explores their improvement on skills related to being global citizens. While the previous findings provide solid evidence that all students had developed some sense of GC, this chapter offers insights as to what specific aspects of GC each individual had developed and how it happened. Based on the results from the three sets of interviews, all 19 Chinese international students provided considerable evidence of developing specific skills related to GC and global citizen attributes, such as the attitude of inclusiveness, international employability, intercultural communication ability and mindset of critical thinking. Although studying in the UK during the special time of the COVID-19 pandemic can be challenging in various ways for Chinese international students, it offered them some unique opportunities to improve specific skills for the adaptation of global change.

The research views the skills related to GC as ‘global skills’ within which there are a variety of different types of skills. Bourn (2018) interprets the term ‘skills’ as not only “abilities and capabilities to carry out activities”, but also including “broader themes related to working with people, and social skills such as co-operation, empathy, trust and respect” (p.2). My research focuses on evaluating these skills, specifically in relation to Chinese international students’ GC development, which are named ‘global skills’. In light of Bourn’s (2018) definition of skills, the research defines ‘global skills’

as associated with students' competency to carry out activities in a globalised world, attributes for engaging with people from different cultures and thinking ability to understand global issues.

To have a broader view on what types of skills Chinese students demand and expect from overseas study. I asked the 120 respondents to select two skills which they valued the most in the initial questionnaire. Table 5.6 shows the results from the questionnaire:

**Table 5. 6 Top two skills students wish to develop in the UK**

Top Skills Wanted	Votes	Proportion
Global outlook	41	 34.17%
Intercultural communication	50	 41.67%
Critical thinking	51	 42.5%
Creativity	9	 7.5%
Academic skills	43	 35.83%
Culture awareness	5	 4.17%
Teamwork	4	 3.33%
Use of new technology	4	 3.33%
Independence	21	 17.5%
adaptability	11	 9.17%
other	1	 0.83%
Total Respondents	120	

The questionnaire showed that there are four types of skills perceived by students as most desirable: critical thinking, intercultural communication, academic skill and global outlook. I noticed that critical thinking was the most valued skill by many students. It posed the question as why the students have a strong need for improving critical thinking and whether their expectations could be satisfied through study abroad. With this curiosity, I designed a few interview questions with the intention of providing a

deeper understanding of how students perceive each skill and how their experiences facilitate their skills development.

From the data from the three rounds of interviews with 19 students, six themes emerged as global skills which the students highlighted through their study abroad experience. Table 5.7 displays each theme’s definition and its sub-elements for the purpose of presenting findings in a logical order. The definitions are drawn from my interpretation based on the interview results.

**Table 5. 7 Six Themes of Global Skills**

Theme	Definition	Sub-elements
Intercultural Communication	Students’ ability to understand and communicate across different cultures and social groups, with the awareness of different ways of thinking, beliefs, values and identity.	language, culture awareness,
Critical Thinking	Students’ approach to perceive the world around them and thinking styles to process information from the outside world, which predetermines their response and interpretation of situations and people.	critical thinking, mutual understanding. independent thinking
Personal Growth	The process by which students improve their core characteristics as global citizens and continually develop themselves to	adaptability, independence, confidence

	reach their full potential in a globalised world.	
Academic Skills	Students' habits, techniques and strategies applied to learning, which are critical to success in global universities and a knowledge economy.	pedagogy, learning style, knowledge
Social Engagement	Students' interaction, involvement, participation and connection in global society, which signifies their relationship and commitment as a member of their social groups.	social connection, participation, activism
Digital Literacy	Students' cognitive, technical and emotional skills of using ICT to receive information and communicate in a global community on various digital platforms.	use of social media, online learning

In the following section, all five themes are discussed with a longitudinal approach to present the improvement of students' related skills at different stages of their study abroad journey.

#### **5.4.1 Intercultural communication: language and culture awareness**

According to the literature review, intercultural communication and intercultural competence are often used interchangeably. I have chosen intercultural communication as it suggests human connection and relationships between people.

All students reported significant improvement in their intercultural communication skills, which include their proficiency in English and awareness of other cultures, especially British customs. During the first round of interviews, although many students considered their English level to be “good enough” based on their IELTS test score, every student claimed some degree of “language barrier” in terms of understanding lectures and daily communication. The students tended to reason their initial weakness of intercultural communication in English as a “lack of understanding of British culture and being unfamiliar with how to deal with foreigners”. In this sense, the competency of intercultural communication was formed by not only students’ English language level but also by their familiarity with British culture. The two aspects are presented separately in the following section.

English skill was deemed as the “essential ability” of global citizens by most students. During the first round of interviews, all students claimed their inadequate level of English had been the primary challenge and biggest “barrier” for them to adjust to academic and social life in the UK. To address how important English skill is for Chinese global citizens, Student 1 shared the story of his role model:

“In my eyes, Jack Ma (founder of Alibaba Group) is a great global citizen, because he could speak English very well to spread his business idea and philosophy everywhere in the world. English skill is the key for us to open the door of the Western world”. (S1)

Indeed, most students believed that English language skill determines the quality and depth of their connections with Western society. The primary barrier for social integration to develop global outlook was a lack of fluent English for the majority of Chinese international students. Moreover, as communication through email is not common in China, many students had never written an email in English before. Many students claimed that through their communication process with personal tutors by emails, they gained some relevant global skills in terms of “how to exchange ideas in an English manner” (S18).

In the first interviews, English was the biggest problem for most students, especially those who did not go to a three-week pre-session course. The results from the three



rounds of interviews demonstrated significant improvement in students' English language skills in terms of verbal communication and formal writing. The initial problems with language, and communication more generally, were gradually overcome with time, usage and the student's total engagement within the prevailing English language atmosphere. It was also noticeable that 11 out of the 19 interviewees who attended pre-session courses before starting their master's programme felt much more at ease throughout their whole study journey. In this sense, the pre-session language course served as an effective path for students to adjust to their life in the UK.

Many students recalled that they gained a profound understanding of Western culture and history through celebrating Western festivals such as Christmas and Thanksgiving with their peers or local families. Seven out of 19 students spent Christmas with local British families, who they found from their universities' student services or through charities such as Host UK. These students reflected that they not only learnt the tradition of the most important festival in the UK, but also felt deeply touched by "how nice and welcoming" people could be towards them when they were alone and far from home. At the same time, five out of 19 students highlighted their experiences of hosting Chinese New Year parties at their student accommodation and invited other international students. Moreover, Students 14 and 17 explained how much they enjoyed lighting up candles to celebrate Diwali with their Indian peers. It can be seen that celebrating festivals together with the local community and other international students provided Chinese students with meaningful opportunities to truly experience the norms and values of different cultures.

It is also noticeable that students' journey of gaining cultural awareness was not always pleasant and smooth. Some students reported frustration and being helpless when they were placed in a "strange situation". Student 10 shared a "painful" experience during her part-time job as a waitress in a local pub, through which she learnt that cultural awareness is "crucial to survive in the Western world":

"I was serving a dish that was too hot from the kitchen. Without thinking, I took a tissue from my pocket. I put the tissue around the dish to protect my hands not getting burnt and placed the dish in front of customers... The next day I received an email from my job agent said the pub

decided to sack me because I served food in a completely wrong way... I was in shock and burst into tears. I often saw waiters use tissue to hold hot dish in China, but here they were so strict about the dish serving manners and didn't even tell me straight way to give me a second chance."

Through this unexpected experience, Student 10 regarded cultural awareness as a "deep-rooted subconscious assumption" in both her and the British pub manager's standard on hospitality manners and communicative behaviour. On one hand, she assumed what's common in China is also acceptable in the UK. On the other hand, she couldn't understand why the manager didn't "correct" her in person but told the agent to sack her instead. She didn't realise those differences in the subconscious until the conflict occurred.

To sum up, all the students confirmed they had seen significant improvement in their intercultural communication skills, from their English language skill to cultural awareness. Through recognising their own cultural values and biases during daily communication with their international peers, most students gained the ability to step outside their previous worldview and embrace new perspectives. When asked about the strategies to deal with the perceived differences for the global otherness, some students described how they developed new habits and lifestyles to adjust to their surroundings. However, a few students still had a Chinese mainstream lifestyle in the UK by still consuming Chinese food and staying within the Chinese community in the UK. The findings suggest that the students who spent more time pursuing intercultural communications with their international peers had significantly higher levels of improvement in their English language proficiency and cultural awareness.

#### **5.4.2 Mindset: critical thinking**

The critical thinking skill was frequently cited by Chinese students as a very desirable outcome of their overseas study and was deemed as "something that can only be learnt in a Western education system". The results from the initial questionnaire also

indicate that 42.5 percent of 120 Chinese international students selected critical thinking as the top skill they expected to improve through study in the UK. The interview findings provide rich evidence to suggest that Chinese international students highly value critical thinking as the core skill, not only to achieve academic success in the UK, but also to transform their worldview from “single focused” to “globally acknowledged”. For many students, cultivating a critical thinking style was an “inevitable transformative process” in order to adjust to the UK’s education system, which emphasises independent and proactive learning. For some students, this process involved some degree of “struggle in self-reflection”. However, a few students found it hard for both Westerners and the Chinese to change their habits of mind.

Although all students mentioned their noticeable improvement in critical thinking, each student defined the term “critical” differently based on previous experiences, and there were various forms of transformation in their thinking styles. Through communicating with their peers and exploring international literatures on their subject of study, the students described this transformative learning process as: firstly, the journey of gaining critical thinking began with realising that everyone has different values and perspectives; secondly, after acknowledging the existence of different worldviews, the students further realised that there exist various approaches and solutions to the same problems; thirdly, sensing the possibility of diverse standpoints and solutions, the students concluded that critical thinking skill is “the ability to see things from different angles” (S16), “understanding the difference between Western and Eastern” (S12), “not judging things as black or white” (S17), “considering holistic and long-term impact of global issues” (S15), “the approach to exam a phenomenon objectively” (S2), “being able to tell the difference between opinion and facts” (S7), and “find out the assumption and reason behind everything” (S8) etc.

The majority of students reported that they had learnt and practised critical thinking when they were completing coursework and dissertations. Those students found that critical reading and writing skills were essential components in their academic life in the UK, so that they would “inevitably” become critical thinkers in order to complete their course. Student 2, who majored in Translation Studies, explained that through writing essays on international affairs, she found critical thinking is about looking at global issues “dialectically and as objectively as possible”. That meant she needed to

read through a large number of studies to explore a topic, such as “how to maintain sustainable development” from different international scholars without her own subjective judgement prejudicing her work. Through the process of extensively comparing various perspectives, as she claimed, her thinking style transformed from “looking for a template of correct answer” to “independently and creatively brainstorming all possible answers”. In the same vein, many students also considered critical thinking as “realising there is no single correct answer or solution to any problems”.

It is worth mentioning that, unlike the majority of the students who believed thinking styles can be transformed, Student 6 stated that:

“I grew up in China and my mindset is already shaped by China’s education system since childhood. Unlike Western students who have a flexible mind, my thinking style is all about knowing the right answer without questioning where the answer came from. I found it’s too late to cultivate critical thinking style as I’m an adult now”. (S6)

Nevertheless, Student 6 claimed his improvement is about knowing what critical thinking is and acknowledging his weakness in such a way of thinking. It seems that, on one hand, Chinese international students were eager to become critical thinkers, while on the other hand, some believed their mindset was somehow fixed to the traditional Confucian way of thinking, making it hard to modify.

When digging into the reasons why Chinese students found their weaknesses in critical thinking, many students considered shifting their mindset to a critical thinking style as “the biggest challenge for becoming global citizens”, because this process, as Students 4 and 14 explained, involves “critically reviewing our previous convictions and reconstructing our worldview”. Student 4 stated, “the most difficult thing to understand in this world is ourselves and our own assumption of the world”. Therefore, self-reflection with the aim of understanding their own worldview was the most challenging part for students to step into a thinking style transformation. Moreover, most students said they tended to have a habit of mind which believes there only exists one correct answer and it is hard for them to accept the possibility of multiple “right answers” from others’ points of view. As Student 10 stated, through comparatively reading literature from China and the UK on her subject, she could tell most information were purely different people’s opinions and “opinions can’t be either right or wrong”.

In this sense, the student found that letting go of their previous assumption to accept others' opinions posed a challenge on their mindset, yet was an important step to reach critical thinking.

On one hand, many students began thinking critically by examining their habits of mind and in time shifted their assumption from "there is only one right answer" to "there exist multiple acceptable options". On the other hand, some students claimed their critical thinking journey started when they extended their focus and worldview. Student 19 mentioned her transformation to have a critical thinking mindset started when she realised her "self-centred" focus:

"All the news I cared about used to be about what's happening in China or my hometown, because knowing this information directly benefits my own life. I didn't care about events in other parts of the world. So when I chatted with others, my worldview tended to be very narrow with strong stereotypes and even selfish". (S19)

After this self-reflection in the first interview, the student decided to open up her mind and focus by actively listening to her international peers and paying more attention to global issues outside China. Similarly, Students 11 and 19 reported their shift in focus from "egocentric" to "seeing the world from others' perspective". Moreover, as Student 2 reflected, her mindset's transformation to critical thinking involved "imagining the feeling and thoughts of others from their standpoints".

It is also noticeable that the students' transformation in critical thinking skills was not only on their own way of thinking, but also on their impression of what the "Western way of thinking" is. For instance, in the first interview Student 7 argued that the ability of critical thinking is what differentiates Western learners and Chinese students. At the beginning of his overseas journey, he was eager to learn critical thinking from his Western teachers and peers. However, after months of living in the UK, he concluded that:

"When I was in China, some of my English teachers always complained that, unlike Westerners, Chinese students can't think critically. However, since I came to the UK, I found most western students and even teachers don't have critical thinking skills either! If they do have, they should be able to understand Chinese students' mentality... They are not global citizens as I thought before". (S8)

Student 7 found that, compared with Westerners who didn't travel abroad or have knowledge of Eastern culture, he is more qualified to be a critical thinker who understands and has experienced both sides of the world. Similarly, Students 13 and 14, who had extensive international travel experience and work opportunities in multinational companies in China, claimed their critical thinking ability was far better than their Western peers in the UK. In this sense, Chinese students defined critical thinking not as "a Westerner's unique thinking style", but as a mindset possessed by people who understood and had experienced both Western and Eastern culture, regardless of which side they were from.

To sum up, Chinese students value critical thinking skills not only in academic settings, but also as lifelong skills which empower them to appreciate different worldviews, find various solutions and understand global issues. According to the interview results, the students developed critical thinking mainly through the learning process in the classroom, working on their coursework, communication with international peers and understanding global issues from analysing various media sources. Most students were able to investigate global topics of depth and complexity through a thorough process of evaluating, integrating, and synthesising information in order to create coherent solutions and greater knowledge. Therefore, through their study abroad, the students developed their own viewpoints and opinions based on compelling facts and careful consideration, while acknowledging that crucial thinking is a lifelong endeavour.

#### **5.4.3 Personal growth: adaptability, independence and confidence**

All students demonstrated their journey of personal growth and strengthening of their characteristics in relation to GC at different stages of their study abroad programmes. At the beginning of their master's programmes, due to facing a new environment, many students expressed their feeling of being "incompetent" and having a "lack of confidence" in their daily life and learning process. After six months of living in the UK, all students reported significant improvement in life skills, especially in adaptability, independence and confidence. At the end of their study abroad journey, all students

felt “confident enough” to be able to adjust to life abroad. They also related their personal growth as part of their process of becoming global citizens.

### Adaptability

The most meaningful personal growth experience as the students reported was on their adaptability. Although all students had travel experience before living in the UK, overseas study to get a master’s degree was described as being completely different from their previous tourist experiences or short-term summer schools. On one hand, the students who received all their formal education in China must immediately adjust to the British education system under pressure of getting qualified for a master’s degree within a year. On the other hand, the students who used to live with their family or shared rooms with their Chinese classmates must live alone for the first time in their life.

Student 2 believed the adaptability she gained from her one-year living in the UK and travelling to other European countries prepared her to be a global citizen able to “travel and live everywhere in the world”:

“As a global citizen, I’m ready that in the future I will attend conferences and travel to different places. With my past one-year experience abroad, I can easily adapt to any culture, climate and environment. That the most valuable gift I gained from the overseas study”. (S2)

At the core of this statement is the willingness of the individual to explore, to learn and to adapt. Indeed, students found that it’s important to be able to navigate the various customs and cultural differences, geopolitical and economical climates, cultural conditions and expectations.

### Independence

Besides the noticeable improvement in adaptability for the students, growing to be independent in their daily lifestyle was viewed as a transformative process to maturity. Many students explained this process as learning to look after themselves. For instance, some students emphasised that being independent for them was not just being physically isolated from their family and friends, but also being psychologically separated from people around them:

“When I was living in student accommodation in China, I shared a room with five other students. We studied the same subjects and have the same time schedule every day. It seemed all people around me shared the same lifestyle and pace... But in the UK, everyone around me has a different daily routine and life focus. We share the same house but have different things in our minds. I have to plan my own life. That’s independence for me”. (S5)

The foremost transformation appeared to lie in their improved sense of responsibility and independence, not just in organising the progression of their studies, but also their entire student lives within the UK community. Student 19 reflected:

“It’s the first time I went abroad; The first time I ever take an international flight; The first time I live alone... I saw many things for the first time in my life in the past six months. I feel like living in a dream even, unreal. It’s the first time I felt like a global citizen.

Interesting, the majority of the students mentioned the improvement of their cooking skills as an important indicator of their ability to look after themselves. Student 9 explained it this way:

“I realised a global citizen is simply someone who can survive and be happy everywhere in the world. When I was living in China, I wasn’t independent and so didn’t feel like a global citizen. Now I have to look after myself. I learnt what is responsibility even just from shopping and cooking”. (S9)

The interviews also revealed students’ motivation and willingness to adjust to the demands of a new living and learning situation within an altered environment, their conscious and reflexive change towards more independent learning and their remarkable adaptability.

### Confidence

At the beginning of their living in the UK, most students claimed that their confidence level drastically decreased compared to when they were living in China and they felt somehow “disadvantaged” compared to their western peers. As Student 8 described in the first interview, she found the ways Westerners walk and talk were always



“projecting a confident image”, but Chinese students like herself tended to always be “hesitating and shy”. Some students demonstrated their strong feeling of lack of confidence when they had just arrived in the UK. As Student 18 reflected, a lack of confidence to communicate in English created “a vicious circle” that she didn’t have enough opportunity to improve her inter-personal skills in the first few months. As time passed, the students gradually began to get used to their surroundings and the initial feeling of uncertainty decreased. Student 6 shared his transformative breakthrough in building confidence as a key improvement in relation to his global skills:

“When I just arrived in the UK, I was so shy that I didn’t talk with other foreign classmates in the first three weeks! I thought they would laugh at my poor English and strange accent. Then I gradually realised they don’t expect me to speak perfect English so that they can be friends with me. As long as I dare to break the ice and speak with them, they become friendly and welcoming”. (S6)

More than finding confidence in connecting with people and settings around them, Students 7 and 11 both reported their transformative strengths of confidence in Chinese culture and their identity as Chinese international students. Student 7 claimed that he found most Chinese international students’ feelings of “disadvantaged and shy” were actually based on “a false assumption” that China’s culture and social system were inferior to the Western character and capitalised system, which amplified individual freedom and modernisation. Indeed, as Student 7 addressed, when Chinese students view their own culture and national identity in a negative way, they tend to consider themselves as a “disadvantaged group” in front of international others. However, through gaining an understanding of the real differences between the systems of China and the UK, some students reached the conclusion that both communism and capitalism have merits and weaknesses:

“I was told by some international media and even from textbooks that regardless of its large economy, China is a less modernised and developing country with many social problems. I always thought we should learn everything from the West in order to improve... After the past six months living in London, I learnt the West is not always the best and there exist many social problems in the UK as well. Since realising China’s system also has some advantages such as effectively dealing with COVID-19, I feel much more confident about being a Chinese and a global citizen who’s from China”. (S11)

#### 5.4.4 Academic skills: pedagogy, learning style and knowledge

At the beginning of their postgraduate courses, most students claimed their previous learning style in China is a “fixed approach that to learning any knowledge through standardised textbooks”. Typically, this included taking notes in the lectures without any questioning or discussion with teachers and classmates, then reading over notes and textbooks to memorise information for passing exams. Student 4 criticised the weakness of rote learning in China as “simply a passive listening, reading and memorising process”. Student 15, who majored in TESOL, interpreted the different learning styles between Eastern and Western as:

“In China, learning is about memorising what is taught by teachers with the aim of achieving a high score in the exams. In the UK, learning is about discussing and sharing options with other learners. So that learners can learn from each other while independently constructing their own viewpoints”. (S15)

Besides learning styles, many students pointed out that the teaching style in the UK is completely different from that in China. Student 13, who studied accounting, explained that the role of teachers in the UK is “to provide support for students’ independent learning”, while teachers in China are more “forceful in telling students exactly what to learn but not how to learn”. For Student 4, the most different thing in the classroom is the students’ interactions with teachers:

“In China, students could not interpret lectures and ask questions in front of other students in the classroom. But I found it’s very common for students to speak out loudly to challenge lecturers here. It seems the whole pedagogy and relationship between students and teachers are very different between China and the UK”. (S4)

In the same vein, Student 18 recalled that her teachers in China never gave her a chance to express her thoughts and doubts, both in the class and in her coursework. Through discussion with her classmates in the UK and directly asking questions in the class, she found “a better way of learning by communicating with teachers and learners”. Student 13 explained how she viewed the differences in Chinese students’ learning attitudes:

“Chinese philosophy assumed being silent is the best way to show politeness and respect, so that students must conform to teachers through not talking during classes. I even thought if I speak in class or ask questions, it’s a waste of the teacher’s time.” (S13)

Half (10 out of 19) of the interviewees who majored in social sciences reported their “big leap” in English academic writing and researching skills through completing their coursework and dissertation. Firstly, as Students 4 and 16 claimed, they experienced “learner autonomy” when they could freely choose which topic they were interested as their essay topics; Secondly, as Students 2, 17 and 18 explained, through their self-directed search for literature as references for their dissertation, they acquired the skill to collect and organise trustworthy information; Thirdly, most of the students highly valued the support and feedback they received from their personal tutors.

During the third round of interviews near the completion of their postgraduate programmes, all 19 interviewees confirmed that they had passed their exams and coursework, even if the result scores were not all satisfying. At the same time, they were either in the process of writing dissertations or preparing for their final exams with the certainty of graduating on time. One of the most notable improvements, according to the students, appears to be their pedagogical flexibility, in addition to their considerable gain in English language skills. This was demonstrated in part by their sense of responsibility and independence in organising not just their academic advancement and social lives within the new setting of their UK institution, but also their adjustment to the changing of their study method to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the lockdown, most students showed motivation and willingness to adjust to the demands of their learning circumstances through changing towards more independent learning.

To sum up, the majority of students demonstrated their transformation from “silent knowledge receivers” who never spoke with teachers and peers in the classroom to “active learners” who proactively participated in discussion and teamwork. Moreover, although some students showed initial confusion and frustration when they had to study independently through reading and researching, all the students agreed that their overall study skills were remarkably improved. As student 8 reflected, a global citizen is someone who not only has subject knowledge in order to be a professional

worker, but also has an ability to evaluate and construct new knowledge, which contributes to an international community.

#### **5.4.5 Engagement: social connections and participation**

From the interview results, all 19 students made various degrees of effort to socialise with their peers and participate in various forms of communities and events. At the same time, all students demonstrated their strong feeling of a sense of belonging to their universities and obvious tendency to maintain strong-tie relationships with other Chinese students. Through their active participation in student societies and volunteer work, the majority (17 out of 19) of students reported their significant improvement in global skills related to how to engage with people from diverse backgrounds and build up meaningful connections in an international community. As the students reflected, their initial purpose of social participation was closely related to gaining GC, such as to: “fulfil the curiosity on other culture and people” (S4, S12), “find a sense of belonging outside China” (S1), and “have a responsibility to the wider global society” (S2, S5).

The most common community participation Chinese students took part in is joining student societies organised by their universities’ Student Union and attending church services arranged by their local churches. Some 10 out of 19 students became a member of one or a few student societies, such as sports society (S3, S14, S15), foreign language learning society (S7, S10) and entrepreneurship society (S2, S5), based on their personal interests. As those students reflected, they had improved global skills especially relating to cooperation through teamwork with others who shared the same interests. Students 12 and 15 both claimed that attending weekly church community services provided the most valuable opportunity in the UK to gain various global skills, ranging from cultivating cosmopolitan values to finding belonging to a global community. Student 15 even described his local church as a type of “school for global citizens” from which he met people from different backgrounds and learnt to respect everyone as “an equal member of the humanity”.

Apart from engagement with student societies and the local community, some students participated in volunteer work, including teaching Chinese to school children (S7, S10), local community services for elderly people (S2) and helping charities with

fundraising (S5). Student 2 shared her heart-warming friendship with a local old lady who she met from her volunteer experience:

“We decided to stay in touch after I participated in a volunteer programme to help her shopping. I’ve visited her every Sunday to give her company. She could drive very well even though she’s almost 90 years old! She took me to church, supermarkets and some charity events... I really enjoyed going out with her. She is my best friend in London. She doesn’t talk much with me. But from her eyes, I could feel she liked and trusted me”. (S2)

As Student 2 reflected, the meaningful friendship she established with that British lady provided her not only with a valuable opportunity to improve intercultural communication skills, but also a sort of global skill that empowered her to “connect with others beyond age, race and culture”.

Remarkably, the majority (17 out of 19) of the interviewees provided rich narratives regarding their participation in social engagement, which, in terms, enhanced their global outlook and global skills. However, Students 6 and 18 stated they were not interested in taking part in any form of out-of-class social activities besides going out with their Chinese peers. Compared with other students who demonstrated significant gains in intercultural social skills, these two students reported no obvious improvement in their cosmopolitan values and didn’t feel any deep connections to the multicultural communities in the UK.

When asked about their social circle, apart from Students 10, 11, 15 and 15 who often socialised with foreign students, most students said they spent most of their social time with other Chinese international students. The main reason was a large proportion of their classmates and flatmates appeared to be Chinese. For instance, four students who majored in TESOL from different universities reported the situation of more than 90 percent of their classmates plus all their flatmates were Chinese, reducing their international study experience. Student 9 specifically complained that one of her lecturers even spoke Chinese sometimes in the class with the intention of better engaging with a class full of Chinese students, but this behaviour negatively impacted students’ impression of the quality of education in the UK. Moreover, many students complained about the problem of their universities’ accommodation sharing situation, which hindered the improvement of their overall global skills. For example,

Student 8 expressed her dissatisfaction at the arrangement of her student accommodation:

“I’m really not happy that 90 percent of the students living in the building of my student accommodation were Chinese! If I knew this before, I would not book this accommodation. I expected to live with students from different countries. I felt my study abroad experience is discounted due to my living environment”. (S8)

Similarly, 11 other students also claimed they were “unexpectedly” placed in apartments only shared with Chinese students. While a few students found this sort of arrangement reduced their feeling of “homesick” and made it easy for them to communicate with their flatmates in Chinese, most students were concerned that living with merely Chinese peers reduced their chances of engaging with other international students and limited their GC development.

In contrast, Student 11 said as he knew universities tend to arrange Chinese students to live in the same place, he specifically requested to live with foreign students when booking his room. It turned out very well as he had three British flatmates who helped him to “extend global outlook”. Similarly, Students 5, 10, 14 and 15 who shared accommodation with non-Chinese students reported their remarkable improvement in gaining a global outlook through daily communication with their flatmates. These students considered their foreign flatmates as “significant others” with whom they exchanged ideas and reflected on their own lifestyle.

However, it is crucial to note that apart from Students 11 and 14, 15, the majority of students mentioned that they much preferred to communicate and befriend with Chinese peers because of “the effectiveness of communication” and found a sense of belongingness within Chinese student groups. Most students built up strong-tie friendships with their Chinese classmates, flatmates and members of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA). Just as Student 10 reflected, Chinese students’ preference of staying within their own community in the UK served as an important strategy for them to better adjust to the unfamiliar environment abroad and offered them a sense of security that their Chinese peers would protect them against unpredictable discrimination and mistreatment. This phenomenon was even more obvious during the outbreak of COVID-19, when most of the Chinese students formed online WeChat groups to support each other and share information of the pandemic.

To sum up, on one hand, the majority of students made efforts to engage with other international students and within the local community through taking part in activities organised by their student's union and charities to improve their global skills. On other hand, due to the limitation of the university accommodation arrangements and their own preferences, most Chinese students tended to stay in touch mainly with other Chinese international students. It can be seen that the students who proactively participated in social engagement demonstrated higher levels of GC development than those who were not willing to spend time in out-of-class activities.

#### **5.4.6 Digital literacy: use of social media and online learning**

According to the interview findings, the global skill of using western social media to connect with others and accessing international news was deemed to be an important capability which most students made significant improvements. At the beginning of their study abroad journey, all the students noticed that the most popular social media in China, such as WeChat and Weibo, are not widely known and used by Westerners. At the same time, almost all the international networks and news media, including Google, YouTube, Facebook, BBC News, were not available in China. This gap in social media usage between China and Western countries created a barrier which limited the effective communication and understanding of global issues for Chinese students. Student 11 considered the inaccessibility of western media in China to be the main restriction on students wishing to become global citizens in China:

“For Chinese students, in addition to language and culture, our world is separated from the Western world by media. In China, we can't see what Westerners have on their social media and they are also not keen on using our internet platforms. Without a commonly shared online platform, it's impossible for us to know and connect to the outside world in China! Only when I'm in the UK, I can access Western social media and feel connected”. (S1)

In the same vein, Students 6, 9 and 16 also claimed that they had breakthroughs in extending social networks and global knowledge through using western media.

According to many students, the freedom of using Western social media in the UK made a remarkable difference in their lifestyle and dramatically improved their global

outlook. The majority (18 out of 19) of students said they started to use Facebook and WhatsApp to keep in touch with their international peers since arriving in the UK. They found that the ability to use Western social media is an essential global skill to keep in contact with people from different countries. As the students reflected, if they didn't study abroad, they might never be able to cultivate the digital skill of using Western's mainstream platforms. Indeed, apart from Student 18 who showed no interest in connecting with Westerners, all the students confirmed that the use of Western media platforms offered them great opportunities to build up an international network and gain new information. For instance, Students 12, 13 and 14, who studied business management, claimed that they started to use LinkedIn at the beginning of their postgraduate programme. They explained that their professional network and knowledge of their industries were extended strikingly through connecting with international experts on LinkedIn. Thanks to using this Western form of social media, most Chinese students felt that it was much easier to keep in touch with their teachers and classmates.

Apart from increased online connections with Western peers, many students reported that they accessed information not available in China through some news media. Some students listed Western news agents such as the BBC and the Washington Post as those they began to read news from since arriving in the UK. These students commented on the mainstream Western media as "more neutral and objective" on reporting international news, compared to China's news agents. With a strong interest in western culture, a few students switched watching videos from Chinese platforms, included Youku and Bilibili, to YouTube and Netflix. Student 12 explained how she dramatically extended her global outlook through watching videos on YouTube:

"Even I heard of YouTube in China, it's the first time I used it when I arrived in the UK. I was amazed by how much fascinating information I could get from YouTube. I fell in love with watching documentaries about the world's history and mystical religions. Those are things I didn't know their existences in China. I learnt a lot about the world and felt like a different person with global knowledge". (S12)

Student 12 reflected her learning experience by using YouTube as an important step to transform her knowledge structure from "China focused" to "global informed". Moreover, she concluded at the end of her study abroad journey that a global citizen should be well informed about what is going in the world outside China and social



media such as YouTube can provide a person with all the valuable resources to become a global citizen without any international travelling.

It is also noticeable that, although most students increased their time and attention spent on using Western media, WeChat was still the most popular platform which all the students frequently used to communicate with their Chinese peers in the UK and family in China. The continuous use of Chinese social media provided the students with a “comfort zoom” that allowed them to remain connected to China whilst in a foreign environment. All the students believe that social media played an important role in significantly reducing their sense of loneliness and made it convenient for them to share information and thoughts within their virtual network of like-minded people and friends. However, as a drawback, some students found they became “lazier” in that they tended to spend less time socialising with people around them and less time outside of their comfort zone. In this case, excessive use of social media during study abroad actually prevented Chinese students from expanding their social networks and integrating fully into local society.

Due to the closure of campuses during COVID-19, all students had to take their classes online from the end of March 2020. The students had never received online learning experiences before, and this incident provided students with a chance to experience “an international distance education”. The perceived positive and negative consequences of online learning were explained during the interviews.

To sum up, the Chinese international students were heavy social media and ICT users, but they only got used to Chinese internet platforms due to restrictions in China before going abroad. However, after they came to the UK, many students adopted Western social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn. The freedom of using social media significantly facilitated many students’ GC development with regards to extending networks, gaining a global outlook and viewing global issues from different perspectives.

In conclusion, this section provides insights into the specific global skills Chinese international students acquired through their study abroad journey and the details of

how students learnt to become global citizens. The analysis of the findings from the three sets of interviews shows that despite numerous challenges and struggles throughout their study and daily life, all of the participating Chinese students managed to cope with the demands of the learning and living environment of their UK university. According to the students' own reflections, most of their transformative learning experiences contributing to gaining global skills took place out of the classroom. Near the completion of the master's programme, all the students agreed that they had experienced significant improvements on various skills related to GC and those skills were valuable for their long-term personal and professional development.

### **5.5. Outcomes of Study Abroad and GC Development (Main RQ)**

Upon further detailed examination of the interviews, the accumulated data suggest that every student had very different experiences, perceptions and engagement in GC development, so that the outcomes of their study abroad experience differs. Based on the 19 interviewees' reflections from their overall experience, I found that study abroad had impacted students' personal and professional development in various aspects, including knowledge, outlook, thinking style, culture awareness, international travel, employability, English skill, adaptability and social network. To better understand in detail which outcomes were mostly identified by students, I conducted a questionnaire on the 19 interviewees at the end of their postgraduate programme. Students were asked to select two areas they had experienced the most improvement on. Table 5.8 presents the results of the final questionnaire:

#### **Table 5. 8 Students' Identified Outcome of Study in the UK**

Main Outcomes	Total	Proportion
Learnt subject knowledge	5	26.32%
Gained global/international outlook	9	47.37%
Cultivated critical thinking	7	36.84%
Understood different cultures	5	26.32%
Experienced international travel	2	10.53%
Enhanced employability	3	15.79%
Improved English language skill	4	21.05%
Adoptability and independence	3	15.79%
Expand social network/term work	0	0%

This table illustrates that developing a global outlook and improving critical thinking are the most reported outcomes of study abroad for Chinese students. To a considerable extent, the students perceived that international mobility empowered them with global awareness rather than academic skills and employability. Comparing Table 5.8 with Table 5.1 (Reasons of Study Abroad) and Table 5.7 (Top Skills Wanted Through Study Abroad), it can be seen that students' main expectation relating to gaining a global outlook and improving critical thinking was generally satisfied. However, another key desired competency in terms of intercultural communication and networking was not fulfilled for most students. This finding was also reflected throughout the interviews.

### 5.5.1 Personal Development

As the results from three rounds of interviews revealed, gaining a global/international outlook has been the most cited demand and outcome related to GC for Chinese international students. All students had heard the term international/global outlook (国际视野) in China and shared similar understandings of its definition. Their understandings mirrored Bourn's (2018) view on global outlook as "respecting listening to and valuing different perspectives" (p.133) and recognising "the complex nature of many cultural identities" (p.149).

Most students related their formation of a new global outlook to gaining cultural awareness, which is not limited to British culture, but a variety of diverse cultures. Through communication with other international students, Student 15 realised “everyone’s cultural and global outlook influence the way her/she perceive the world, treat others and even eating habits”. This awareness helped him connect with others because of those differences and made him curious to dig into the belief systems of others. Student 10 explained that she gained awareness and interest in other cultures in London because she was exposed to different cultures through communicating with other international students:

“Before study abroad, I thought the Western culture is the most desirable and fascinating one. Now I realised every culture in the world is fascinating and precious. I found passion on Latin American culture and even started learning Spanish”. (S10)

In contrast to students who showed increasing appreciation of other cultures, some students reported their increasing cultural awareness of their own Chinese culture, which they didn’t have a “deep understanding” of until they left China. As student 11 mentioned, there is a popular saying that “the more you go abroad, the more you like your own country” among international students. He initially thought this statement is somehow expressing “narrow-minded nationalism”, but at the end of his study abroad journey, he realised the biggest improvement he had is in appreciating his own Chinese culture:

“The most awaken experience is when I started to realise the beauty of Chinese language and literature. I was born in this (Chinese) culture but didn’t feel anything special about Chinese characters. Until I compared it with the Western culture, I found the profound meaning within Chinese ancient wisdom and its symbolistic writing system”. (S11)

At the same time, Student 3, who worked in a Chinese medicine shop in central London, also reported her “eye-opening” experience in learning how foreigners trust Chinese traditional herbs:

“There were customers from all over the world: British, Arab and Indian... They all use Chinese medicine for losing weight, relaxation, improving digestion and so on. I didn’t know my traditional culture is

accepted by foreigners before. I feel so amazed that Chinese tradition can be influential in the UK". (S3)

Student 11 also quoted a Chinese proverb that said: "there is no scenery at a familiar place" to describe his previous indifference and insufficient understanding of Chinese culture. Coincidentally, Student 7 also expressed his increasing awareness of the value of Chinese culture as one of the main outcomes of GC development.

Apart from recognising the value of different perspectives and cultures, some students found they had regained confidence in their global outlook when confronting their Western peers. Many Chinese students assumed Westerners have a higher level of global outlook due to their social and political values of democracy and freedom. However, Students 7 and 14 displayed a "switching attitude" on their impression of Westerners with some degree of criticism:

"I used to regard Westerners as open, inclusive, liberal and democratic, but now I found it's not the case! They have very strong prejudice and ignorance toward the rest of the world, especially China. They actually know much less about the world than we Chinese do. There are 170 million Chinese citizens going abroad every year making effort to learn different cultures, while most Westerners don't bother to travel internationally and understand other cultures. Compared with them, we have more people with a global outlook in China". (S7)

In this way, Student 7 felt "much more confident as being a Chinese with global outlook" at the end of his study abroad journey. Student 14 also expressed her disappointment at Westerners' lack of global outlook:

"After spending some months in the UK, I felt shocked by how close-minded those Westerners are. My boyfriend is British. He doesn't have any interest nor knowledge about other parts of the world". (S14)

Nevertheless, those students who expressed disappointment at Westerners' lack of GC reported their "increasing confidence" in their own global outlook. Indeed, the students not only reported their increasing awareness of different cultural identities but also gained a deep understanding of their own Chinese culture. However, some students also felt "disappointed" when they found that their Western peers didn't have a global outlook as they expected.

### **5.5.2 Professional development**

I define professional development as the process in which students acquire knowledge, skills and qualifications in order to thrive in the global job market. Overseas study has been viewed as one of the most effective ways to improve employability in China. It can be seen that all the students mentioned that their motivation of study abroad was strongly linked to increasing their competitiveness in China's job market. Many students stated their plan of working for multinational companies or international schools in China and those institutions required their employees to have an overseas study background. In this case, the experience of studying abroad and the global skills acquired in the UK were deemed as key for Chinese students to open the door to their dream careers. According to the participants, many employers in China appreciate their study abroad experience, both in terms of the degree from renowned overseas universities and the capacity to adapt to an internationalised work environment.

During the first interviews, 10 out of 19 students expressed their strong intention of finding a job in the UK after their master's study. Although these students showed no interest in settling down in the UK long-term, they expressed their perception that if they could gain some work experience in the UK, they would become truly "international talents" who could find success everywhere in the world. It was notable that some students argued that the capability to find a job in the UK or any multinational company in China was an essential quality of global citizens. The interview at the beginning of the students' study abroad journey illustrates the pattern among Chinese students that they hope to not only study in the UK but also gain some work experience to enhance their professional development.

In the middle of their study abroad journey, the students who wanted to work in the UK described their feeling that it was very hard and "even impossible" for them to receive a work visa as Chinese international students. Some students claimed they realised Chinese students were actually "disadvantaged" when it came to getting a job offer in the UK. For instance, Student 6, who majored in Engineering, even felt a sense of being marginalised after struggling to be recognised as a well-educated and skilful job candidate in the UK:

“British people can easily get a job with a visa to work in China if they want to, but no British company would like to provide Chinese students work opportunity. It’s not fair! I have a better CV than my British classmates, but the employers in the UK always only invite my classmates for a job interview. I think because of my passport and the colour of my skin, there is no chance for me to find a good job in the UK. (S6)

Although it appeared very difficult for Chinese students to get a job offer in the UK, a few students had some part-time working experience during their life in the UK, which included Student 3 who worked as a receptionist at a Chinese medicine shop in centre London; Student 10 who worked as a waitress in local pubs; and Student 17 who worked in KFC near her university. These students highlighted their short-term work experience in the UK as valuable opportunities to improve their global outlook and ability to work in the globalised world. For instance, Student 17 reflected that she felt “very proud” to be hired by KFC and highly recommended to other Chinese international students to seek for similar experience:

“The moment when I felt like a real global citizen was when I started to work as a cashier in KFC. The environment there was nothing like the setting in any university. I was the only Chinese in the team working with people from different educational, social, cultural and economic backgrounds. I learnt to collaborate with a diversity of people and enjoyed a multicultural environment.” (S17)

In the same vein, Students 3 and 10 also claimed that even their part-time jobs were not related to their subject of study, their global skills in relation to working with people from various backgrounds were remarkably improved. The working experience abroad also provided them with a “real sense of living in a globalised society”. In this sense, taking part-time jobs in the host society seemed to be an effective approach for Chinese students to develop GC.

Approaching the end of their overseas study, all students agreed that their postgraduate degrees and experiences in the UK provided them with some degree of competitiveness in China’s job market and even changed their long-term goals of professional development. Student 2, who studied Translation, explained that with her study experience in the UK, she had joined the “global talent cloud in the gig-economy”,

which meant she could provide translation services to people around the world, regardless of time and location.

In the third interview, up until the end of their postgraduate programmes, the majority of students (16 out of 19) decided to return to China to pursue their careers, mostly in international companies or institutions. At the same time, Student 5 attempted to carry on a PhD study at the same university in London, while Students 11 and 14 were still applying for jobs in the UK and were not willing to go back to China. For Student 14, her life was fundamentally transformed through her one-year study abroad. She met her British boyfriend and decided to settle down in the UK. She believed her master's degree plus the global skills she gained would eventually land her a job and new life in the UK.

## **Conclusion**

As the findings have revealed, although all the students shared similar backgrounds as young international students who grew up and completed formal education until postgraduate study in mainland China, they were very different individuals with diverse subjectivity on GC and various international mobility experiences. Their distinctive worldviews, personalities, previous experience, personal interests and subjects of study are as varied as their own definition of GC and how they see themselves in the world. All participants have experienced various transformations while studying in the UK. Most participants reported experiencing significant shifts in their perceptions and understanding in relation to themselves, others, and globalisation that resulted in more open and flexible attitudes. The findings also indicate that international mobility, especially amid the special time of the COVID-19 pandemic, can be challenging in various ways for Chinese international students. However, at the same time, it can be a transformative experience that really shapes their perceptions, values, and attitudes towards GC, which can have long-lasting positive impacts on their lives.

The pattern of GC development appears to be a positive circle: firstly, students' preconceived GC, which is formed by their life history and personal interests, directly influences their motivation of international mobility and experience abroad; secondly,



their international mobility experiences enhance their GC development at different levels; thirdly, with the enhanced GC and improved global skills students are more likely to travel abroad, work in international companies, share a global outlook with others, care about global issues and become involved in social change; finally, these actions, in turn, contribute to more GC development.

The following Chapter 6 will provide a comprehensive discussion on Chinese students' GC development in relation to previous literature and in light of Transformative Learning Theory.

## Chapter 6. Discussion: Study Abroad as Transformative Learning for Global Citizenship

### Introduction

The purpose of this longitudinal study is to explore the relationship between Chinese international students' GC and their study abroad experiences. The previous chapter presented the findings of this study by organising primary data from interviews and questionnaires into categories to produce a rich narrative of students' learning and lived experiences. This chapter aims to provide interpretative insights into these findings in light of Transformative Learning Theory and the three approaches to GC. Whereas the findings chapters split apart and separated out pieces of data to tell the story of the research (Bloomberg, 2019), this chapter is an attempt to construct a holistic picture of Chinese international students' transformative journey.

Based on a profound understanding of the students' changing perceptions of GC and their improvement of global skills, this chapter discusses, interprets and synthesises my findings with the previously reviewed literature. The researched area includes four topics on international higher education (e.g. Knight, 2011; Altbach, 2019), global citizenship (e.g. Schattle, 2008; Killick, 2012; Lilley, 2013; Bourn, 2018), Chinese students' study abroad experiences (e.g. Chen, 2011; Wu, 2014; Mok, 2017; Wang, 2020) and transformative learning (e.g. Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 2012). This chapter intends to combine Chinese students' international experiences with transformative learning and GC development through creating The Circle of GC Development (Figure 6.1) and Framework of Transformative Learning for GC Development through Study Abroad (Figure 6.2).

This research applied a qualitative inquiry of thematic study by conducting an initial questionnaire of 120 students, followed by three sets of in-depth interviews with 19 Chinese international students from three universities in the UK, along with a final questionnaire to the interviewees. The data were coded, analysed, and organised firstly by research question and then by categories and subcategories guided by the conceptual framework of 'Global Citizen Model' depicted in the literature review outlined in Chapter 3. The main research question is 'how do study abroad

experiences influence Chinese students' perception of being global citizens?' with four subsidiary questions:

Q1: To what extent do Chinese students consider becoming global citizens as a motivation to study abroad? (motivation)

Q2: What experiences trigger and facilitate students' learning towards becoming global citizens? To what extent are these experiences transformative? (experience)

Q3: What are the changes in students' perception of GC through study abroad? (change of value)

Q4: What are the perceived global skills students develop through study abroad? (development of skills)

All four research questions were satisfied overall by the findings presented in Chapter 5. The findings in the previous chapter expand the understanding of the process of GC development through international higher education from Chinese international students' own stories and reflections. The overriding finding in this research revealed that the majority of students underwent a significant perspective transformation and personal growth as an outcome of their study abroad journey. A large part of the students' change of values and improvement of skills were closely related to the attributes of a global citizen, which are described in the prevailing studies on GC (e.g. Hunter, 2004; Shultz, 2012; Stein, 2015; Bourn, 2018). This perceived connection between GC and international mobility is demonstrated by the fact that each student identified unique experiences that triggered his/her change in perception of GC and by the evidence that all students had some degree of improvement in specific global skills during their postgraduate programme in the UK. As a consequence, most students have been transformed into a new version of themselves with extended global mindsets and improved skills.

The four main topics of GC development (motivation, experience, value, skill) were used to present the findings in the previous chapters. In the discussion, the study primarily establishes connecting patterns within the main themes, as well as the relationships that may emerge among the various themes. As a secondary level of

analysis, the relevant transformative learning theory and previous research on GC development are tied in, as these themes are compared and contrasted to issues raised by the literature. To reveal the relationship between Chinese students' GC and international mobility, this chapter is organised as shown in Figure 6.1 to answer the four research questions:

**Figure 6. 1 The Circle of GC Development (in relation to research questions)**

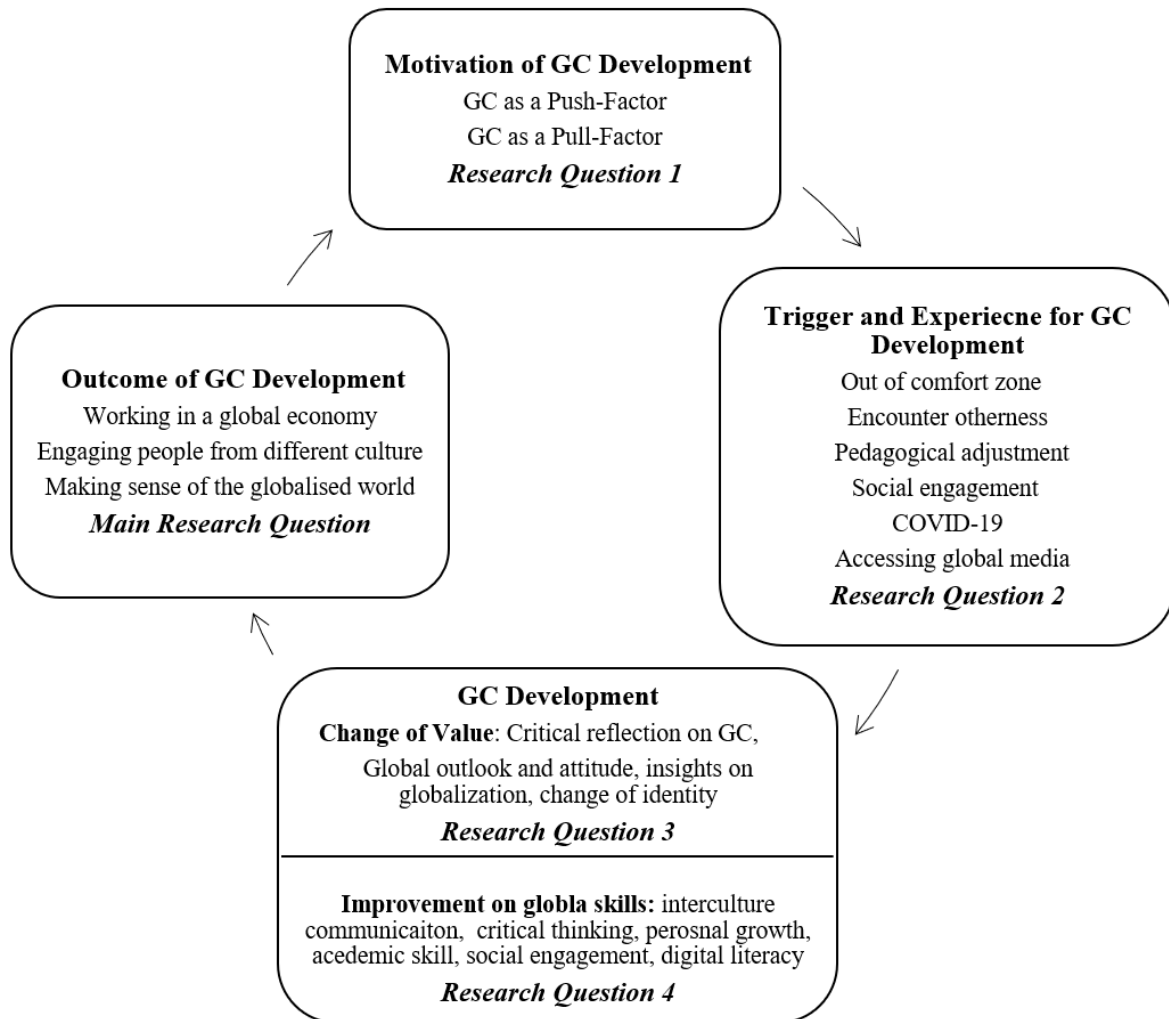


Figure 6.1 demonstrates the pattern of students' GC development in an interactive circle of four main stages, which are also correlated to the design of my research questions. At the first stage, students' motivation for GC development through studying abroad is derived from both push and pull factors, such as career pressure in Chinese society and their personal interests in expanding their global outlook. At the second stage, different types of experiences during their study abroad journey effectively

trigger and facilitate their GC learning. At the third stage, their international mobility experience results in their development in both values and skills related to various elements of GC. At the fourth stage, according to Bourn (2018), with the enhanced GC and improved skills, students are able to act in a globalised world in three ways in terms of professional development (neoliberal), social engagement (cosmopolitan) and critical reflection (critical pedagogy). At the end of the fourth stage, students gain more motivation for GC development through living in multicultural environments with international travel, sharing a global outlook with others, caring about global issues and becoming involved in global movements. Finally, these actions, in turn, contribute to more GC development, thereby the circle of GC development is self-perpetuating.

## **6.1. The motivation of GC development through study abroad (Q1)**

### **6.1.1 GC as a Push-Factor**

As the findings indicate, one of the students' primary reasons to study abroad was in response to the push-factor of China's unsatisfying education system and fierce competition in the job market. The findings mirror Moskal and Schweisfurth's (2018) study on international students which argued that, behind their need for academic and career development, the underlying motivation for pursuing master's degrees in the UK is concerned with the social pressures from the home country. On the surface, this factor is seemingly not linked to GC. However, many students explained that the pressures they faced to push them to study abroad was rooted in China's globalisation that more and more employers value "international talents" with overseas degrees. As studies (Zheng, 2014; Yuan, Li, & Yu, 2019) have reported, the need for human resources with global outlook and skills in contemporary China has pushed the young generation to learn English and pursue international mobility. Moreover, the most well-paid jobs in China are offered by multinational companies or international institutions which only recruit overseas returnees (Mok et al, 2020). In this sense, the increasing demand for GC in China serves as an important push-factor for the students to go abroad.

Apart from the pressure of employability, some students identified the pressure of maintaining social status and the need to "look good" for their family and friends as

another push-factor for them to develop GC through studying in the UK. This attitude toward the pressure of pursuing reputation among a new Chinese generation is explained comprehensively in Cebolla-Boado, Hu and Soysal's (2018) study that China's underperformed university rankings "pushed" more and more students to study in British universities with better international reputations. Furthermore, present China's society values individuals' not only professional and economic position, but also qualifications and social capital. As Student 7 emphasised, people without international experience and who can't speak English were somehow "not well-educated" and can't be as qualified as "high class" citizens in China. Indeed, students hoped to be identified as "global elites" in order to stand out in China's job market, while international mobility serves as the "production line" for such types of elite.

### **6.1.2 GC as a Pull-Factor**

While students shared similar push factors to develop GC which are related to China's globalisation that puts pressure on university graduates to have an international outlook and global skills, they also demonstrated various pull factors to gain GC. My findings indicate that there exist a number of pull factors closely related to the students' intention of developing GC, either explicitly or implicitly. These factors include students' strong desire to improve intercultural awareness, global outlook, critical thinking and international experience. All students emphasised that they are motivated by the pull-force of their universities' global ranking and believed the Western education system has much more advantages to equip them with a global mindset. As such, my findings reveal a pattern of Chinese students' motivation, as described in Marginson (2021), that the Western Anglo-American education system, which global rankings favour, shapes non-Western students' desire to pursue an ideal future that mirrors the Westernised way of thinking and lifestyle.

My findings also confirm the results from existing studies (e.g. Baker & Fang, 2019) that Chinese students with previous international experience are more likely to be motivated to study abroad and have a higher demand for developing GC. More than half of the participants claimed that one of their motivations of studying in the UK was their previous "knowledge and travel experience of the Western world". Most of those

students admitted they had identified themselves as global citizens to some extent based on their previous international experiences before coming to the UK. Friar (2016) suggests that “students who self-select to study abroad have already developed as global citizens to a higher degree than students who did not choose to study abroad” (p.89). Accordingly, my findings confirm such possibility that students who have already developed some degree of GC in China are more motivated to study abroad. Many students stated that exploring the Western world was like their passion and dream since childhood with influence from all the cultural products and English learning. As Fong (2011) points out that contemporary Chinese display similar habits as their Western consumer peers and share a keen use of technology as integral to their experience of the world. Globalisation in China has brought the young generation a certain degree of familiarity with international trends, norms and current affairs. This explains why half of the interviewees viewed themselves as global citizens even before their trip to the UK, and gaining a global outlook was selected by Chinese students as a primary motivation for international mobility in my questionnaire.

As the findings reveal, the students’ strong motivation on gaining a global outlook serve as a pull factor for GC development and explain why many students proactively take part in social engagement activities and make efforts to understand global issues during their study abroad journey. Compared to previous generations of Chinese international students, today’s Chinese students know a great deal about the ‘outside world’ and are also well prepared for international travel (Qin, 2012). However, they must negotiate a cross-cultural spectrum of norms, rules, values, and beliefs in order to navigate many domains of international mobility, which has the consequence of establishing a new identity associated with GC. In other words, although most students are motivated by personal goals, their desires and options are also influenced by the larger social, cultural, economic and political structures of the world.

## **6.2. The Transformative Experience for GC Development (Q2)**

After the interpretation of the students’ motivation to develop GC through international mobility, this part of the discussion chapter explores their study abroad experiences in light of Transformative Learning Theory. It aims to answer the second research

question as to what experiences trigger and facilitate students' learning towards becoming global citizens and to what extent are these experiences transformative. The processes of Chinese students' GC development appear to be consistent with Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 2008). As TLT is a theory in the progress of expanding (Cranton, 2012), my research adds insights as to how Chinese international students' experiences transform them into global citizens. The findings demonstrate that through the journey of study abroad, most students have recognised, questioned and modified their assumptions of both Western and Eastern cultural norms and reframed patterns of thinking, attitudes and behaviours. This reconstruction of their identity and social reality toward GC fits into the framework of Transformational Learning Theory (TLT) explained in Chapter 3. The research shows Chinese students' journey of becoming global citizens resonate with TLT, which is underpinned by students' self-awareness, critical thinking, openness and social engagement.

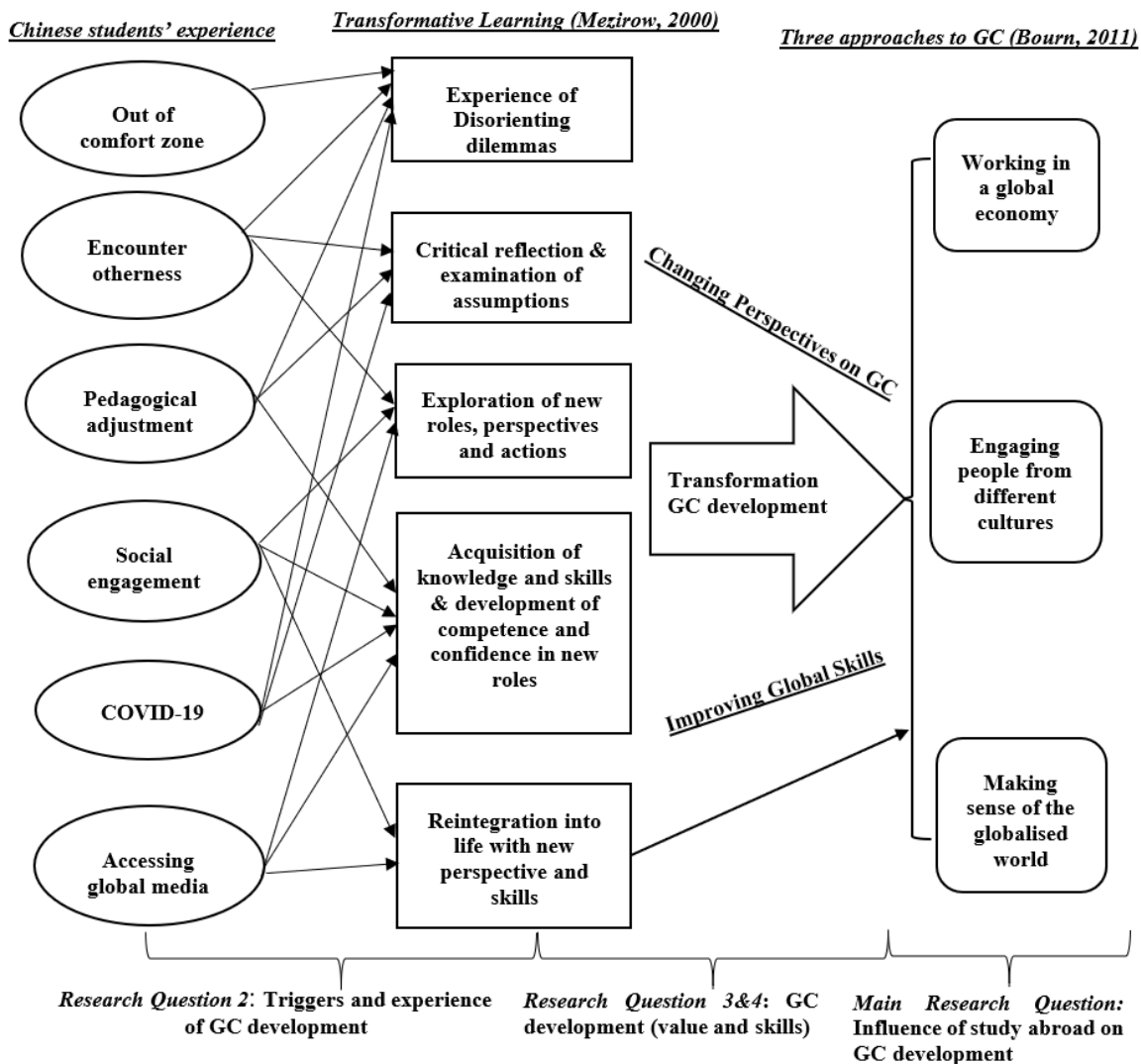
My literature review poses the question that there has been little focus in previous studies on how international students' experiences trigger their transformative learning of GC (Strange & Gibson, 2017; Blum & Bourn, 2019). As such, most literature (e.g. Chang, 2016; Hammond & Keating, 2017) aimed to investigate what students learnt and had improved as the outcomes of international mobility but ignored the initial causes and facilitators, which provided the conditions for GC development. Unlike some scholars (e.g. Streitwieser & Light, 2016; Beech, 2017) who claim the unsatisfying outcome of universities' attempts at educating global citizens, I find the universities and local communities in the UK to have offered international students rich experiences to develop GC, as long as the students are willing to take part in various activities and explore different perspectives. My findings demonstrate that most interviewees reported their experiences in the UK to be generally positive and rewarding, although there was some discomfort at the beginning and frustration during the pandemic. This supports the well-known report on Chinese international students, *White Book of Study Abroad 2020*, which states that the majority of Chinese students view UK as a friendly and safe environment. Some students highlighted their feeling of belonging to their universities in the UK and described the universities as a cosmopolitan global society. They felt being well protected and argued that they can trust people around them and never faced social injustice. It is also noticeable that



most mistreatment toward Chinese students during COVID-19 took place outside universities.

In my view, transformative learning and GC development are both about change in the way students perceive themselves and the world in which they live, and about learning through which students gain knowledge and skills to better cope with complexity and uncertainty. Both are learning processes that enable students to become open to different worldviews, examine their previous assumptions and reconstruct their perspectives, and in turn guiding future action. The outcomes of both processes are more than just adding to what students already know but lead to a different mindset and identity. According to my findings, Chinese students' study abroad journeys are congruent with both Jack Mezirow's TLT (2000) and Bourn's (2011) three approaches to GC. Figure 6.2 establishes a framework that integrates my findings and research questions with the two theories to provide a holistic view:

**Figure 6.2 Framework of Transformative Learning for GC Development through Study Abroad**



At the centre of Figure 6.2 is the five main phases of TLT, which I summarised according to Mezirow's (2000) original 10 stages of transformation, which were explained in the literature review. The framework shows that students' transformative learning is triggered by six types of experience, namely out of comfort zone, encountering otherness, pedagogical adjustment, social engagement, COVID-19 and accessing global media. Each type of experience effectively triggers or facilitates one of the three phases of TLT accordingly, indicated as a web of arrows in Figure 6.2. These six types of experience emerged from the interpretation of my findings and either took place in the universities or in wider society, significantly contributing to the students' development into global citizens. The following section explores students' experiences of transformative learning through analysing each type of trigger, thereby answering research question two: what experiences trigger and facilitate students'

learning towards becoming global citizens? And to what extent is this experience transformative?

### **6.2.1 Out of comfort zone**

My findings show that when students are exposed to an unfamiliar environment and circumstance in the UK, the discomfort and challenges they face trigger their aspiration of becoming global citizens to deal with the new situation. Several scholars (e.g. Klein & Wikan, 2019) argue that the first step for GC development is through being “out of comfort zone”. Indeed, the Chinese students described their feelings of discomfort, confusion and uncertainty at the different stages of their international mobility. At the beginning of their journey, language barriers and cultural differences appeared to be the students’ main concerns of discomfort. In the middle of their living in the UK, intercultural communication and adaptation to the UK’s education system became the new challenge they were facing. At the end of their postgraduate programme, the pressure of completing coursework and returning to China’s job market seemed to trigger students’ out of their comfort zone. As the students suggested, being out of their comfort zone triggered their extension of the horizon and global outlook.

Most students have never lived and studied in the UK before, so they needed to deal with unfamiliar teaching styles, cultures, language barriers and relationships. The findings indicate that even most students didn’t experience obvious “culture shock” as described in the previous literature of Chinese international students (e.g. Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day 2010), yet they all felt some degree of “out of the comfort zone” or “facing unfamiliar environment”. Lilley (2013) described international students’ initial experience of being out of the comfort zone as “the central facilitator of change” on students’ perception of GC (p.161). As such, when students leave their familiar environment and are separated from their families, they must learn to cope independently in all aspects of their lives. This process of adaptation and independence challenges all students to grow intellectually and personally. Taylor (2007) argues when students are experiencing an unknown world which is largely different from their motherland, their previous knowledge and worldviews are

fundamentally challenged. The students demonstrate how coping with the challenges allowed them to reflect and grow intellectually and personally. Some younger students even believed they became much more mature within only a few months of living in the UK.

In my research, the out of comfort zone experience includes all the students' meaningful transitional events, which trigger their noticeable anxiety and result in their adaptation to unfamiliar physical and psychological adjustment. The challenges students faced are similar to McGowan's (2017) findings which contain language obstacles, sociocultural differences and learning difficulties. Among all the difficulties students experienced, language barriers and pedagogical differences are the primary challenges faced by every student at the beginning of their study abroad journey. With time passing, most students overcame these difficulties and turned them into their improved global skills.

### **6.2.2 Encountering otherness**

As described in the literature review, Taylor (1994) and Mezirow (2000) highlight the experiences of otherness and difference as acting as catalysts for perspective transformation, which in turn may lead to intercultural competence and global awareness. My findings show the experience of encountering otherness is perceived by students as a dilemma and way of learning first-hand knowledge which triggered their reflection on themselves and the wider world. According to TLT, the disorienting dilemma is an experience that causes discomfort and disequilibrium, because it comes in conflict with one's present frame of reference. Students then progress through introspection, critical reflection, and dialogue to develop a new frame of reference that is integrated, emancipated, and less discriminatory (Mezirow, 2000). It is notable that the students went through an emotional curve starting from being excited and curious towards the otherness, followed by losing confidence and doubling their intercultural competency when conflicts arose between them and their international peers. In the end, most students gained confidence and resilience in confronting and dealing with people from different backgrounds. As Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) explained, intercultural experience usually starts with stress but contributes to students' personal growth. This process resonates with studies on international students' acculturation

(e.g. Tran, 2012) that interpersonal encounters can act as a catalyst for students to exchange ideas and think differently about their situation and themselves.

For Chinese students from predominantly monocultural backgrounds, the diversity of the UK's universities offered them great opportunities to contact various cultural groups. Unlike China's homogenous society, the UK's universities and local community are formed by people from different backgrounds and ethnicities, so that all the students had meaningful interpersonal communication with diverse others. As previous literature has revealed, being in a multicultural environment triggers students' curiosity and willingness to form a dialogue with people who are different from themselves (Killick, 2012). Mezirow (1996) highlights the importance of communication and rational conversation as a driver for change because it prompts participants to delve deeper into the significance and meaning of their diverse worldviews. These intercultural forms of communication make the students more open and receptive to perspectives from different points of view, because they learn to value diversity and difference without prejudice. Moreover, the awareness of others' perspectives triggered the students to question their previous assumptions of themselves and others. Taylor (1998) considered this type of contemplation on learners' own perspectives and worldviews in the process of encountering otherness as reflexivity which leads to profound transformation.

There exist some obvious limitations as to the extent to which the Chinese students contact other groups. Some students end up socialising and living with peers from China or with similar cultural backgrounds, either positively by conscious choice or due to discomfort with otherness. As Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) explained, cultural links tend to play a crucial part in Chinese students' relationship patterns at various phases of their studies, despite their willingness and efforts to integrate with students from other countries. This raises serious concerns regarding the quality and level in which Chinese students meet the otherness and hence the potential for acquiring a more cosmopolitan worldview as a result of study abroad. However, Student 2 gave a good example for connection with the otherness that through volunteering work organised by her university, she made friends with an elderly English lady and spent weekends with her instead of going out with other Chinese students. This meaningful connection made the student feel like a global citizen. It should be encouraged, and universities

should provide more opportunities like this to truly engage international students to interact with the otherness.

### **6.2.3 Pedagogical experience**

The underlying premise of TLT is that the purpose of international education is to provide students with the opportunity to challenge and change firmly held beliefs to promote a new frame of reference and a higher level of learning (Dirkx, 1998). Many Chinese students considered their experience in the classes, communication with tutors and doing coursework as a form of transformative learning which challenged their previous assumptions and potentially led to a higher level of learning. For those students, their teaching staff, course content and teamwork with classmates provided them with valuable opportunities to discuss global issues, exchange ideas with people from different backgrounds, improve their English communication skills and provide inspiration for further research related to GC. Moreover, many students whose subjects related to English language study, international education, global health and international business found the content of their courses to be related to GC in terms of gaining knowledge applicable worldwide. These students claimed that some global knowledge that they learnt from class discussions were “surprising facts that never appeared in textbooks in China” and this knowledge extended their global outlook. Indeed, many students admitted their various learning experiences in the classes “opened their mind” and even challenged their previous assumption on “what the world is”. This confirms with Clayton’s (2009) claim that the process of transformative learning can be initiated by pedagogical experiences that come into conflict with students’ previous ways of thinking and learning,

While some studies (e.g. Johnson 2008; Lilley, 2013) on international mobility point out that GC development rarely takes place in the lecture portion of study abroad programmes, my research finds that all the Chinese students considered attending classes as a vital activity for them to gain a global outlook, learn critical thinking and improve intercultural communication. The students reported that they were inspired by how their lecturers guided them to explore knowledge in different perspectives through class discussions, flexible curriculums, various reading materials and thought-

provoking coursework. According to Taylor (2008), transformative experience in the classroom highly depends on the design of curriculums, pedagogical approach and students' relationship with teachers. Compared with China's education system which emphasises rote learning (Hu, 2017), the pedagogy approach in the UK stimulated the students' autonomic thinking process and promoted multicultural dialogue. In other words, the process of pedagogical adjustment triggered the students' GC development. The increased self-awareness, understanding, and appraisal of needs are supported by a number of qualitative studies that examined the experience of international students in British universities. As Friar (2016) found that class discussion that is embedded in the curriculum appears to have a positive impact on GC development. Indeed, the learning of the curriculum and discussion with classmates is a self-reflective stage of transformative learning.

#### **6.2.4 Social engagement**

Several studies (e.g. Larsen, 2014; Klein & Wikan, 2019) identify volunteering and participating in community activities as the most effective experience for international students to develop GC. My findings also prove that the students (17 out of 19) who took part in volunteering work, part-time jobs or student societies had higher levels of improvement in their understanding and skills in relation to GC. In contrast to a study conducted by Huang and Turner (2018) which claim Chinese students in the UK have a low participant rate and are indifferent to extra-curricular activities, the interviewees showed high awareness and willingness to take part in various forms of social activities. Moreover, many students emphasised the importance of the balance of their academic study with social engagement. Some students even cherished taking part in social activities more than attending classes, because, in China, they could learn the same knowledge content but not have the same intercultural experiences. This confirms Greatrex-White's (2008) discovery that engaging in the host community through volunteerism and reflective practice appears to have a positive relationship with students' global citizenship development regardless of programme duration. Furthermore, the idea that volunteerism may have a positive impact on GC is consistent with Friar (2016), who states that social participation offers international

students enriching concrete experiences in their host country communities that they might not otherwise experience.

As Tarrant (2010) emphasises in the association between GC and social activism, many students considered their “eye-opening” experience of witness protests as a significant trigger for their GC development. Students described witnessing various social movements, such as environmental protection and Black Lives Matters protests, as transformative experiences which made them realise the possibility of collective action for social justice. Such experiences deepened students’ understanding of global issues in real scenarios, which they did not have a chance to sense in China. As a consequence, Chinese students not only gained awareness of social justice, but were also inspired to participate in social movements. Although some scholars (Hammond & Keating, 2017) claim international students are unlikely to get involved in social justice movements in a host country, many Chinese students proactively took part in various protests and charity work in the UK, which concerned the environment, students’ right, anti-racism, LGBT and public health. The students explained this as because protests are not allowed in China, they thought social activism was a lofty and unrealistic aspiration until they really had a chance to experience it in the UK. Indeed, most students highlighted witnessing social movements and getting involved as their key step into becoming global citizens.

In sum, social engagement served as a form of immersive learning effectively triggered the students’ GC development. Chinese students also demonstrated some passion in social awareness and responsibility, which are considered by Morais and Ogden (2011) as key elements of GC. In addition, a few students identified that their volunteering experience of promoting Chinese language and culture in the local British community as significantly enhancing their sense of being global citizens. The experience of witnessing global movements such as environmental protests and BLM became intensive triggers for students to realise the possibility of participating in activities that enhance social justice. All the concrete experiences of engagement with the host society can be the trigger for transformative learning. Most of the social activities that trigger GC do not pedagogically take place in the formal class. It is worth mentioning that not all the students had GC development experience through engagement with the local community. Out of the 19 interviewees, Students 6 and 18 claimed they didn’t



like social activities and the main triggers of their GC development happened in the classroom. The two students believed this was because of their introverted personalities, which could be explained by Yang (2019) that Chinese students' personality and personal interest could be closely linked to the level of their GC development.

### **6.2.5 COVID-19**

The outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic in the middle of students' postgraduate study programme had a profound impact on most Chinese students' overseas journey and inevitability influenced their perception of GC. This event highlighted certain existing global societal and political issues, such as the disparity between national policy, inequality between countries and among populations, racism and problematic international relations. The students faced various challenges including lockdowns, travel restrictions, concerns about health and safety, and potential discrimination from British society and international media. Although confronting some emotional frustration and inconvenience of travel, all students claimed that the pandemic deepened their understanding of globalisation and accelerated the changing process of how they sense themselves in the interconnected world. The students' understanding of globalisation and its implications for both their home country and the host country changed substantially during the event. TLT, in recent work by Dirkx (2006), acknowledges the affective domain which deals with emotions and feelings of students, thereby explaining how the event of COVID-19 influence students' overseas journey and GC development. My findings demonstrate both positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 on students' international mobility experiences and their reflection on GC during this very special period.

My research conforms with Zhao (2020) that some Chinese students faced unfair treatments and were discriminated in the UK, because they might be viewed as possible COVID-19 carriers. Although students used to feel they were treated and respected as individuals and "just as a human being equals to everyone else", during the outbreak all of them demonstrated the same concern about being mistreated or misunderstood, both on the campus and in wider society. Chinese students

understand that associating COVID-19 with a specific race or nation is a form of bias and injustice. In this situation, they developed a deep understanding of the importance of social justice and inclusiveness. Moreover, as the virus spread started from China and throughout the world, Chinese international students in the UK experienced the coordinated reaction of international organisations and governments, the debate about the origins of infection, different nations' unique reactions to the pandemic, and policy variations in the travel restrictions on foreign people (Wang, 2020). Such a multitude of experiences fostered their understanding, reflection and responses to global issues. Moreover, they gained new insights as to the shortcoming of Western social systems, political traditions and economic structures, which they used to consider as being superior to China's system. In this situation, some students also expressed their hope that GC could be manifested as a form of the "global collectivist" painted by Rhoads and Szelenyi (2011), in which all nations and citizens could share the same priorities and act together to tackle the crisis.

The findings reveal that the experience of living in the outbreak of COVID-19 triggered Chinese students to learn how to cope with uncertainty and rapid change, which are identified by Bourn (2018) as the main characters of globalisation. During that very special time, students are increasingly faced with complexity, uncertainty and unprecedented challenges in their personal and professional lives. The students explained that they were somehow "unlucky" to experience the unrest of pandemic in the middle of their one-year overseas study, but this "unusual adventure" triggered their personal growth, facilitated their understanding of globalisation and evoked their awareness of the importance of GC. Lilley (2013) finds that regardless of students' gender, age, major and personality, living in a perceived "unknown and unsafe" environment is likely to cause them "loss of personal balance" and place them in "varying degrees of shock" (p.161). Indeed, at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, most students claimed they couldn't adjust their psychology to keep track with their studies and daily routine. Feeling the "shock" and "uncertainty" of what was happening imposed emotional stress and homesickness on most students' mindsets in the middle of their study abroad journey. Furthermore, Freire (1978) argued that taking risk during uncertain times facilitates personal growth and deepens students' understanding of the world. Chinese international students claimed that the outbreak of the pandemic evoked their awareness of the "interconnected consequence of a

global event”, which they reflected as “the negative impact of globalisation”. COVID-19 not only accelerated students’ understanding of globalisation, but also triggered their interests in wider global issues.

Moreover, as Bourn (2021) suggested, COVID-19 has not only raised concerns about students’ health and wellbeing, but also put pressure on universities’ capacity to withstand crises and sustainably support learning. My findings show students’ mixed attitudes towards their universities’ role and responsibilities during the pandemic. Some students complained that their universities provided them support at a superficial level through sending informational emails weekly, while others appreciated their personal tutors’ effort in frequently contacting them to ensure their safety. Moreover, some students reported their motivation on learning decreased in online learning during lockdown, due to a lack of communication with their teachers and other students. It seems that the connection with university staff and classmates makes a difference in students’ overall experience during the crises. Therefore, it is important for universities to maintain a sense of community and connectedness to motivate and comfort international students in special and difficult times. Furthermore, universities also need to play a crucial role in protecting students against racism and mistreatment through promoting social justice in the wider society.

#### **6.2.6 Accessing global media and online education**

My research shows that the majority of the students related their GC development experience to the opportunity of using Western social media and accessing international news in the UK. Chinese international students are heavy social media and ICT users, but they only got used to Chinese internet platforms due to restrictions in China before going abroad. However, after they came to the UK, many students adopted Western social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn. The freedom of using social media significantly facilitated many students’ GC development with regard to extending networks, gaining global outlooks and viewing global issues from different perspectives. The experience of using Western social media abroad made a remarkable difference in students’ lifestyles and dramatically improved their global outlook. Moreover, due to the closure of campuses during

COVID-19, all students had to take their classes online from the end of March 2020. This provided students with a unique chance to experience international online education.

As my findings show, the use of Western media was regarded as a remarkable trigger for the students to understand the Western world and connect with their international peers. Due to China's censorship of global media, most students would never have a chance to use social networks such as Facebook and access news platforms such as the BBC. The opportunity of accessing Western platforms provoked the students' realisation of different views on global issues and how the world projects China's place and situation. As research (Yu, Foroudi & Gupta, 2019) on Chinese international students' media usage has discovered, actively engaging in global social media has the potential of expanding students' global outlook through critically evaluating information. The findings identify the powerful influence of Western media on Chinese students' worldviews and their transformation into well-informed global citizens. Through the experience of accessing global media, the students demonstrate their openness to new information and awareness of different perspectives, which is viewed as a vital part in achieving transformative learning by Taylor and Cranton (2012).

My findings also report the students' experience and perception of online learning during the pandemic. All the participants had to take classes and learn by themselves without going to campus for the last two months of their master's programme. On one hand, many students felt comfortable with the online study mode as an alternative way of learning. On the other hand, the majority of students claimed that they didn't receive the full value of what they paid for international education. Because for Chinese students, study abroad programmes are not only about learning the knowledge but also the physical experience of university campuses. This is reflected in Marginson (2020) that the distant education during COVID-19 only provided a portion of the educational function inherent in traditional face-to-face education. That means that online learning only offers the students cognitive knowledge and academic accreditation, but not full social interaction with teachers and their peers, out-of-class activities or study facilities such as the library and laboratory. As such, the participants showed mixed attitudes towards online international education amid pandemics. Some

believed they had gained digital learning experience while others thought distant learning significantly reduced the value of international education.

In conclusion, my study shows Chinese students encountered six types of novel experiences which could potentially trigger transformative learning and GC development. The students' overseas learning experiences are generally positive and satisfactory besides the fact that some students faced mistreatment during the COVID-19. All students had some unique experiences that contributed to their GC development through formal learning and out-of-class activities. However, a very small number (2 out of 19) of the students felt they didn't have any remarkable transformative experience, while one of them (S6) even reported a negative impression of GC and interactions with other cultures after teamwork with his international classmates. Overall, the various experiences within international mobility could significantly trigger a profound change in students' values and worldviews, which causes a "paradigm shift" (Cranton, 1994) that reshapes students' global outlook and attitudes. The next section discusses how the students perceive such a shift in their values in relation to GC.

### **6.3. The Change of Values and Attitudes on GC (Q3)**

After the exploration of the participants' experiences during study abroad, this part of the discussion focuses on interpreting the student's change of values and attitudes in relation to GC in order to answer the third research question: what the changes of students' perception of GC through study abroad are. My findings resonate with Killick's (2012) illustration that becoming a global citizen is a process of transformative learning in which students made a profound change in their sense of self in the world, values and attitudes and skills to act in globalised society. Students in my research display three dimensions of GC development in accordance with TLT, including cognitive (change in perspective), psychological (changes in attitude and identity) and behavioural (changes in skills), varying at the individual level. These three dimensions are similar to Braskamp et al.'s (2009) assertion that international mobility facilitates students' GC development in the major domains of cognitive (knowledge and awareness), intrapersonal (identity and attitudes) and interpersonal (skills and social responsibility). This section discusses the cognitive and psychological change of

students' perception and attitudes towards GC, followed by the next section's analysis on the students' behavioural change as improvements in global skills.

According to my research, although the definition of GC is rather vague for Chinese students, every interviewee offered meaningful interpretations of what a global citizen is and their sense of themselves in relation to GC. The findings confirm that all the students had different degrees of transformation in their perspectives, knowledge and attitudes on GC. The increasing awareness and understanding of globalisation and GC are consistent with previous research, in which students gained first-hand insights on global outlook (Tarrant, Rubin & Stoner, 2013). However, the awareness is different: compare with previous studies in which Western students had an awakening in social justice (post-colonise, economic, inequality, power imbalance), Chinese students had an awakening in inclusiveness with respect and appreciation, social participation (protest, freedom of speech) and critical thinking (see global issue from perspective of different groups). In light of Transformative Learning Theory, this section interprets the students' change of values in relation to GC from three aspects: the shifted perception on GC and globalisation, the reframed global outlook and attitude and their sense of selves as global citizens.

### **6.3.1 Critical reflection on GC and globalisation**

The main constructs of the TLT are "critical reflection and dialogue" and "change in frame of reference" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 5). Frame of reference represents learners' intellectual capacity through which all experiences, thoughts and actions are filtered and processed into assumptions, beliefs and worldviews (Mezirow, 1997). In my research, students' conception of GC is a type of "frame of reference", which is formed by their prior knowledge and past experiences. According to Mezirow (1997), critical reflection is the core element to drive the change on frame of reference. My findings confirm that students' change of perception on GC occurs as a result of critical reflection on their lived experiences abroad, which involves a critical review of their presupposition and firmly held beliefs. Moreover, the international experience also fosters students' dialogue with others and with themselves by questioning, discussing,

reflecting, being aware of, and reconceptualising their place in the world, which reflects Paulo Freire's (1972) emphasis on critical discourse.

At the beginning of their study abroad journey, the majority of students showed a desire to gain a global outlook and admitted they had some understanding of GC at a superficial level. Many students stated that their initial frame of reference/conception on GC was about "understanding education systems of all the countries", "working in an international company in the UK or USA", "having friends from all over the world", "being travelled and lived in many countries" and "speaking more than three languages". This echoes the expression that Chinese students tend to link GC with intercultural awareness and work experience (Baker & Fang, 2019). At the end of their master's programme, all students felt "more realistic" about being a global citizen in China. This way of change fits into Mezirow's (1991) explanation that reflection involves a critique of students' assumptions to determine whether their old beliefs remain functional in the new context. For instance, Student 8 shared her change of perception on GC as:

"I used to have a very lofty and idealised concept of global citizenship. I thought I want to be a global citizen who achieves great things that impacts the whole world. Through the past few months, I gradually understand global citizenship is embodied in every little thing..... I will be an ordinary teacher after returning China, but I will always care about global issues daily, learn about other cultures and share my experience in the UK with my students. For me, this is the expression of being a global citizen". (S8)

Just like this student, many participants shifted their view of GC from doing something extraordinary with global impact to simple daily action that concerns people around them as well as global issues. Indeed, GC is not a lofty aspiration but a form of participation in different aspects of students' life, regardless of their location and occupation (Bourn, 2018; Mansilla & Wilson, 2020). With this new insight of GC, most students felt more like a global citizen at the end of their programme in the UK.

My study shows every student had some shift in his/her worldview with regard to personal, cultural, economic, societal and political values. In contrast to Western sojourners who were "humbled by their lack of prior insight into the world beyond their

regional borders” (Lilley, Barker & Harris, 2015, p.236), Chinese students found more confidence and courage through their international mobility. As Taylor (2008) explained how learners critically reflect on their own worldviews through encountering and communicating with others, Lilley (2013) found that international students’ “self-reflection and self-realisation” take place when they encounter different cultural norms and start thinking differently about their previous assumptions. This critical reflection process facilitated students’ “self-formation” as global citizens (Lilley, 2013, p. 162). All students mentioned their acknowledgement of the negative side of globalisation as the “uncontrolled spread of virus across national borders”. Many students believed globalisation was to be blamed for the pandemic. Some students claimed they never thought about and felt the consequence of globalisation before until the outbreak of the pandemic. It is remarkable that all the students mentioned they started to watch more news from international media and drastically increased their focus on what’s going on in different countries during the pandemic.

In addition, several participants “discovered” that compared with their Western counterparts, Chinese international students appear to have higher levels of intercultural awareness and a deeper understanding of globalisation from their international experience. Because of China’s fast economic growth, modernised and urbanised society, unequal income distribution and emphasis on English language education, Chinese overseas students may readily identify themselves as members of a global consumer society and the so-called “international generation” (Qin, 2012, p.149). Many students reasoned their feeling of being marginalised and misunderstood in the UK to the fact that many people in the host society had low levels of global awareness and acceptance of diversity. Therefore, some participants considered themselves to be much more like global citizens than the Western students who never studied abroad and did not have any knowledge about Eastern culture and social systems. In this sense, my findings argue that international students are more likely to identify themselves with GC than many home students, due to higher levels of contact with various cultures and international travel experience. However, some participants displayed negative impressions on home students’ lack of global outlook, which might reinforce the stereotype of otherness and separation between the Western and Eastern students, as reported in McGowan (2017).



Amid COVID-19, students reported their realisation of the “oppressive reality” of globalisation as mentioned by Paulo Freire (1972). Many of them had suffered from unjustified discrimination and mistreatment physically from their environment and psychologically from both Chinese and Western media. They were portrayed as “virus carriers” or “aliens with facemask” in the west and lacked support to return to China while being labelled as “rich kids who love other countries more than China” in Chinese social media. Their desire for global social justice and wish for social change grow stronger from this unusual situation. They sensed the problem of racism and separation of human community deeply rooted in the existing global system due to a lack of understanding and empathy. The pandemic became a magnifying glass that revealed these negative sides of global society, which were covered up before during peaceful times. However, many students realised they have a choice between being victims of injustice and taking action to protect their own rights, even just by speaking out to their universities or sharing their feelings on social media. Some students even considered taking part in my research to testify their demand for fair treatment as a way to pursue global justice. In this way, some students fulfilled their role as agents to make a change, which resonated with Bourn’s (2021) view on GC as having a strong active component which encourages students to participate in seeking justice and resolving conflicts.

### **6.3.2 Reframed global outlook and attitude**

In my research, a reframed global outlook means an intentional shift from a limited, nationalistic and inward-looking worldview to a sense of connection and empathy with people from different places in the world (Bourn, 2018). The literature review summarises the potential outcomes of international mobility in relation to a global outlook as broadening horizon, widening worldview, deepening cultural awareness, accelerating personal growth, gaining cosmopolitan values, improving intercultural competency and adding perspectives (Cameron, 2014; Perez-Encinas, Rodriguez-Pomeda, & de Wit, 2020). Chinese students’ development of a global outlook not only resonate with those Western scholars’ views, but also present a quest for reconciling the different value systems between the East and West. My findings demonstrate that most students are continuously aware of and reflecting on their outlook, values and

cultural norms in their new environments. According to Mezirow (2000), the mechanism of transformative learning is characterised by experience, critical reflection and open dialogue. The students were able to shift their worldviews and change their attitudes as a result of this combination of reflection and dialogue, resulting in a more inclusive global outlook.

The findings indicate that most Chinese students view GC as the attitude of openness, inclusiveness and harmony toward different people, cultures and worldviews. The majority of participants claimed they became more and more open-minded towards divergent cultural experiences and more willing to engage with others through intercultural communication and self-reflection, due to deepening understandings of different perspectives and increasing acceptance of otherness. This development is defined as increasing cosmopolitanism by Moskal and Schweisfurth (2018). Compare with studies on Western sojourners' GC development which emphasise the understanding of global inequality and reducing the sense of prejudice (Jooste & Heleta, 2017). Chinese participants tend to address their increasing value on the unity of humanity through mutual understanding and appreciation. This difference in global attitude could be explained by Mansilla and Wilson (2020), in that relating to others in a harmonious manner is essential to Chinese collectivist society which regards individuals as inseparable from a world connected by social interactions. This finding also reflects Wang's (2020) assertion that the centrepiece of Chinese people's global value and attitude is seeking common interests while allowing space for diversity, appreciating differences within the global environment and actively participating in cross-cultural dialogue. With this prevailing sense of GC among Chinese citizens, many participants relate their understanding of GC and globalisation to China's development agenda of building "a community of shared future for mankind", which advocates cooperation across nations for the collective interest of every human and the well-being of the planet through sustainable development.

In addition, the majority of the students demonstrated increasing awareness of their own culture and how China's social context shaped their perspectives, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of their place in the world. At the same time, many students reported that they started to appreciate China's civilisation and their life conditions only when they were outside China. This finding is addressed in Hunter, White and Godbey

(2006) that a global citizen must step outside her cultural box to have a comprehensive outlook of her own norms and values, before engaging with people of different backgrounds. In this way, the students could recognise their “taken-for-granted frame of reference” to transform their narrow worldview into a global outlook that is more respectful towards their own and others’ perspectives (Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p.76). Moreover, some participants expressed their desire and actions to promote Chinese culture in the host community, such as teaching Chinese language and calligraphy to local children, and host Chinese festival parties for other international students. In the eyes of many participants, being global citizens means not only the exploration of other cultures and values, but also sharing their own traditions with others to add diversity to the global community. However, the previous literature on GC development rarely mentions this dimension of responsibility of global citizens’ preserving and promoting of their own cultures.

My findings also confirm with Baker and Fang (2019), in that international mobility experience does not necessarily lead to more positive attitudes in the host countries and globalisation. A very small number of participants reflected that their impression of the British culture, society and political system was getting worse throughout their stay in the UK, especially during the pandemic. As Wang (2020) explained, present China’s government intends to achieve “Rejuvenation for the Chinese People” by fostering trust in the socialist path and ideas with Chinese characteristics through the adoption of communist fundamental principles of collectivism and authoritarian in its citizenship education (Wang, 2020, p.3). As Chinese students complete such citizenship education in China and pursue further education overseas, they may encounter a misalignment of their political beliefs and host nations’ ideologies. Indeed, my research shows that some students were still heavily influenced by China’s state ideology and even propaganda. They claimed the gaining of confidence in China’s social system while disfavours the Western democratic system and culture of individualism through study in the UK. Indeed, as Ying (2018) argued, international mobility can sometimes reinforce the emotion of nationalism and anti-Westernisation for a small portion of Chinese students.

### 6.3.3 The change of identity

According to the reviewed literature (e.g. Wu, 2015; Sherman, Cofield & Connolly, 2020), throughout the journey of study abroad, international students attempt to understand, evaluate and reconstruct their personal, intellectual and cultural identities. On one hand, my findings indicate that Chinese students tend to have a strong national identity, which was intensified when living in the UK, and link their confidence with how they perceive China's place in the world. There were many students that claim their personal confidence increased when they received compliments on China's international reputation and decreased when they saw negative news about the Chinese government. Most participants felt their direct link to their home country is much solid than the sense of belonging to a wider global community. On the other hand, Chinese students' identity is not only equivalent to their nationality but also their social status, international study experience, and a distinct way of thinking, learning and living. In general, participants in my research displayed three layers of identity and senses of belonging. Firstly, in the international context, they often identify themselves as members of the Chinese community and feel like outsiders in the UK. Secondly, among other Chinese international students, they tend to differentiate themselves based on which university and course they study. Thirdly, compared with other Chinese citizens without international education experience, they prefer to view themselves as "overseas returnees" with a considerable global outlook and intercultural competency.

My findings address the fact that the Chinese students had not only broadened their horizons, but also reframed their perspectives and sense of themselves in many ways. As described in Lilley, Barker and Harris's (2015) study, after studying abroad, students "see the world and people differently" and "consider other perspectives and possibilities they had not imagined previously" (p. 236). The findings also confirm with Gu and Schweisfurth's (2015) study on Chinese overseas returnees that through building new social connections and developing global competencies, the students had shifted their identities which enable them to "view and live life with a new sense of self" after their transformative journey and "distinguish themselves from those around them over time" (p. 947). In other words, Chinese international students were transformed into a type of "global Chinese citizens" who are somehow different from

other Chinese citizens who haven't lived abroad. For example, Student 10 discovered that the GC gained through her study abroad experience had profoundly changed her identity, social circle and lifestyle when she returned China:

“After I came back to Shanghai this March, I was very surprised that my identity and lifestyle are totally changed. I rent a flat living with people who had overseas study experience just like me. It's common for overseas returnees to build up a social circle in China. We have Western food together and decorated our place in the British style. We often communicate in English and share our experiences of living outside China. We discuss our opinion on global issues... I felt my global outlook is still extending day by day through being friends with other overseas returnees”. (S10)

Just like this student, many participants felt they share many things in common with people who had overseas experience and prefer to work and live in a more cosmopolitan environment. As a consequence, their social circle and living environment were changed to “an international lifestyle”. Some students who returned China before the final round of interviews also reported “surprising” changes in their sense of self due to the transformation of their thinking style and global outlook. Although the 19 students who participated in the interviews had stayed in the UK between seven to 10 months which, is not a long time, they all identified themselves as “overseas returnees” who are Chinese with an international identity. This shifted sense of identity is explained by Gu and Schweisfurth (2015, p.950) as feeling “a Chinese self and an international student self” at the same time. Indeed, the study abroad experience has transformed many Chinese students into a new type of Chinese citizen with a global mindset similar to other overseas returnees. Even they might lose connection with previous friends who never studied abroad before, they viewed this change as a positive life improvement. Moreover, overseas returnees have more chance of continuously developing their GC in China through being in the same circle.

According to Dirkx (1998), transformative learning processes can serve to disrupt old patterns of meaning and promote the formation of new ways of perceiving oneself and the world. Through their transformative journey, most students claimed they had become “a different kind of Chinese citizen” compared with their friends who didn't

study abroad and “a new type of global citizen” compared with their Western peers who see the world only through the Western perspective. This sense was even strengthened when the students just returned to China. They found their mindset and worldview had been changed and they were somehow “very different” from other Chinese people. Several students claimed they prefer to socialise with peers who had international experience in China, because they share the same level of global outlook. Some students also emphasised they see themselves as a form of special “global citizen in China” who could communicate with foreigners with ease and only want to work for multinational companies. The findings provide strong evidence of the students’ transformative shifts in their perception of GC, which lead to a deeper understanding of themselves, their relationship with others and their place in the globalised world. The students had developed a new sense of themselves in the world as Killick (2012) described. Furthermore, most students said their career goal, future plan and sense of themselves had changed after their living in the UK.

My findings reflect how Chinese students respond to and handle the challenges in the pandemic, with some struggling with the ideological dilemma between nationalism and globalisation. Many students want to be perceived as global citizens, but their host community seems to treat them as representatives of China’s value and political position. Just as Yin (2012) reported, students might often feel their Chinese nationality hinders them from gaining respect outside China. In my research, Chinese international students’ spontaneous reactions towards the issues surrounding the COVID-19 seem to reflect a wellspring of frustration about their otherness, perceived objectification and growing resentment over their marginalisation within the global society. As Taylor and Cranton (2012) address, transformative learning entails negotiating and acting on learners’ identity, values, beliefs, and meanings in order to attain greater control over their life as socially conscious, responsible decision makers. The students also demonstrated their capability to reconstruct their values, identity and responsibility, as mentioned by Freire (1978), in the process of becoming involving in social justice movements. Resonating with Nussbaum’s (2004) notion of expending belongingness from local to global, the students not only altered perspectives to think beyond their national traditions, but also added more layers to their identities through seeing themselves as Chinese citizens but bound to all other human beings.

In conclusion, the transformative experience of study abroad has expanded Chinese students' global perspectives and enhanced their understanding of their place in the world. Mezirow (2003) explains that where a change occurs to our perspective, we can expect to see a subsequent change in our capability to take action. As a result of the profound transformation, students have reconstructed their social-cultural identities which enable them to better make sense of the globalised world and act with a global outlook. It is also worth noting that among the five demographic variables (age, gender, major, hometown, university in the UK), there appeared to be no correlation between the students' changing of value of GC and their age and hometown. However, gender and the subject of study had some influence on their perception and knowledge of GC. Moreover, the students who made more effort in social engagement showed higher levels of comprehension on cosmopolitan value and critical reflection of GC. After exploring the reconstruction of Chinese students' global perspectives and attitudes towards GC, the following section discusses how they acquire different sets of skills that enable them to act as global citizens.

#### **6.4 Improvement on global skills (Q4)**

My findings show that all participants expressed their feeling of different degrees of profound transformation in their day-to-day life due to the improvement in their global skills. In light of Bourn's (2018) view of skills and globalisation, I interpret global skills as students' abilities to think with a global outlook, to act as global citizens and to live harmoniously in a globalised world. With those skills students are able to recognise various perspectives and worldviews, appreciate the value of cultural diversity, connect to people in different parts of the world, comprehend the impact of global force, reflect on their standpoint in the complex reality, and most importantly, engage in the process of social change (Bourn, 2015; Bourn 2021). Due to China's increasing international connectedness, some elements of GC are perceived as highly valuable by students, family and employers. These elements include a global outlook, critical thinking skills, intercultural communication and English language skills, which are proved to be attainable through international mobility (New Oriental, 2020). My findings identify six types of skills which students perceived as highly relevant to GC and were

acquired during their overseas study. The six sets of skills are related to intercultural communication (English language skill and cultural awareness), critical thinking, personal growth (adaptability, independence and confidence), academic skills, social engagement (participation and community), and digital literacy (use of social media and online learning).

The existing research, which is mostly conducted by Western scholars and studied by Western students, has discussed what types of skills and attributes can be cultivated through international mobility. For example, Morais and Ogden (2011) view the skills of intercultural communication and cooperation, understanding global issues and self-awareness as the core competencies to nurture for international students. Lilley (2014) identifies the key skills related to GC that can be acquired through study abroad as stepping outside one's social circle to interact with international others, maturity and commitment, resolving problems in different ways and having a widened outlook on life and work; Killick (2011) emphasises the skill and willingness to engage and learn from the otherness at the centre of international higher education; Tarrant, Rubin and Stoner (2013) advocate cultivating the skill of global awareness, social responsibility and civic engagement as the desirable aim of overseas educational programmes. My findings echo the mentioned research in terms of addressing the possibility of promoting intercultural skills, personal growth and social participation through studying abroad. However, just as Bourn (2021) points out that global skills mean different things for students from China, UK or other countries, Chinese students' journeys of developing global skills and their outcomes appear to be distinguished from Western students' international experiences, especially in the aspects of intercultural communication, critical thinking, personal growth and social engagement.

#### **6.4.1 Intercultural Communication**

In my research, intercultural skills are associated with the capacity to appreciate and respect different cultures, interact with people from various cultures, and have a new perspective on one's own culture and relation to the world. My findings demonstrate the students' significant improvement in English language and intercultural



communication skills. Similar to previous literature (e.g. Bamber, 2014; Baker & Fan, 2019) on Chinese students' international mobility in the UK, participants self-reported that the most obvious improvement in their skills took place during intercultural communication, due to inevitable interactions within the international environment of their universities and the wider society in the UK. My findings show that participants in this study had both positive and frustrating experiences that contributed to their development of intercultural skills. Such improvement was caused by their increased daily communication, idea exchange, personal connections, cultural awareness, mutual understanding and engagement in intercultural communities within and outside their universities. As a result, the students are aware of what is going on in different places outside China and the culture of various countries, thereby being able to communicate with non-Chinese people without difficulty or reluctance.

Intercultural skill is commonly defined as a means to adequate and appropriate communication and interaction with people of other cultures (Massaro, 2022). The majority of students reported significant improvement in their ability to identify cultural differences, collaborate across cultures and effectively participate in the classroom. However, not all students agreed that their intercultural experience directly contributes to their attitude towards being global citizens. Ashwill (2021) points out that because intercultural communication is a skill set rather than a mindset, it is possible to be an interculturally competent nationalist with intercultural skills to serve a government or corporation whose goals are at odds with the interests of humanity and the environment. On the other hand, because of the diametrically different attitudes, it is impossible for a global citizen to be a nationalist. My findings confirm that although some students had enhancement of intercultural communication through direct experiences with people from other cultures, they still didn't consider themselves global citizens. In other words, my research finds that intercultural competence is not exclusively grounded in the global citizenship values system.

My findings demonstrate that most students were able to step outside their prior viewpoint and accept new ideas after developing an understanding of different cultural values and their own prejudices via everyday interactions with their international peers and teachers. According to Bourn (2018), intercultural communication for global citizens are related to listening to and respecting different perspectives, effectively

communicating with others who may have different viewpoints, being willing to reflect and change one's perception as a result of interaction with others and seeking mutual understanding and cooperation. My findings provide rich evidence that the participants had realised the fact that there existed different worldviews, values and cultures throughout their daily conversations with other international students and class discussions. Most students demonstrated their enhanced ability to actively listen to various voices without previous bias and avoid conflicts when they come across different views. At the same time, the students developed an awareness of various communicative patterns and how the English language and discourse may have diverse meanings and operate under different cultural norms, which is viewed as the core intercultural competency for Chinese students by Mansilla and Wilson (2020). Moreover, the intercultural skills Chinese students improved also entail making understanding of their relationships with others, as well as the extent to which there are commonalities and differences between their own culture and that of others around the world.

While some studies (e.g. Hu, 2017) claim that abroad study can enhance Chinese students' intercultural understanding and communication skills, other researchers (e.g. Baker & Fan, 2019) question the extent to which these students really have contact with the international community outside of their own. Indeed, the development of intercultural skills was universal to all the students but not equal at the same level among the participants. Many students reported a lack of opportunities to interact with people from other countries due to the arrangement of their classes and accommodations. Moreover, one student even found skills for cross-cultural communication to be irrelevant to her personal development plan and a threat to her Chinese identity. As Gu, Schweisfurth, and Day (2010) explained, the differences among the student population in language, lifestyle, culture, and belief are amplifiers of many misunderstandings that arise on campus, thus limiting Chinese students' interactions with diversity. Moreover, my findings also conform with Qin (2012, p.151) that "Chinese students tend to socialise, live, study and work together". Some participants considered staying within the Chinese community in the UK as an effective social and psychological strategy for coping with uncertainty and staying safe. However, I found this type of strategy limited the students' potential to make a meaningful connection with the global others.

To sum up, on one hand, the students developed cultural awareness and communication skills through interactions with different people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. All the students demonstrated their ability to respond to social interactions and communicate across differences through analysing, interpreting and expressing ideas in a variety of intercultural situations cognitively, affectively and behaviourally, which is addressed as a core global skill in Bourn (2018, p. 126). On the other hand, the participants also admitted difficulties in building social connections and unsatisfied outcomes of social network development in the UK, reflecting a need for more attention to be paid to the communication dimension of GC development. This finding mirrors Baker and Fang's (2019) assertion that many Chinese students could have limited opportunities to engage with international others thus reducing their improvement in communication skills such as English skills and cultural awareness. As such, in order to improve intercultural skills, Chinese international students need more opportunities to communicate and interact mindfully across different cultural groups in the UK.

#### **6.4.2 Critical thinking**

The skills Chinese students improved resonate with the attributes of global citizens defined by Hunter et al (2006), which include awareness of and adaptability to diverse cultures, attitude of openness to difference, and ability to communicate and collaborate across cultures. However, the students not only gained skills in the realm of intercultural communication as Hunter described as "global competency", but also the ability to think critically through reflecting on their own worldviews and attempting to understand the perspective of others. This developed thinking skill is described by Bourn (2018) as "openness to a continuous process of self-reflection, critical dialogue and questioning of one's own assumptions about the world" (p.129). Moreover, most participants also illustrated their increasing understanding of the interconnectedness between China and global society, which mirrors one of the core global skills in Bourn (2018) as the ability to see connections between what is happening in the students' own community and what is happening in the communities of people from different nations and cultures.

My research indicates that critical thinking is one of the most desirable global skills for Chinese students due to the increasing emphasises of such ability in China's education system and the job market. The students valued critical thinking skill not only in the academic settings, but also as a lifelong skill which empowers them to appreciate different worldviews, find various solutions and understand global issues. The findings provide strong evidence that most students transformed their worldview from a single perspective to one that is more globally acknowledged. All the students developed some level of critical thinking through the learning process in the classroom, working on their coursework, the communicating with international peers and understanding global issues from analysing various media sources. Although they had some initial challenges in self-reflection and in changing their habits of mind, most students developed the ability to understand various information of greater depth and complexity through a thorough process of evaluating, integrating, and synthesising in order to adjust to the UK's education system, which emphasises independent and proactive learning. This finding confirms Mansilla and Wilson's (2020) claim that international education can effectively stimulate Chinese students' desire and dedication to question their previous assumptions and inquire about the world beyond their local circumstances.

As illustrated in the literature review, international educators tend to assert that Chinese students don't have the cognitive ability and habit of mind to think critically. Some scholars (e.g. Mok et al, 2017)\_ claim that Western and Chinese students differ in their inclination to use logical or intuitive thinking for problem solving, implying that such discrepancies are most likely the outcome of disparities in cultural norms and educational approaches. Because of their limitations in critical discourse, Chinese students are frequently stereotyped as intellectually inferior to Western learners in thinking styles and ability of problem solving (Turner, 2006). However, the criteria for critical thinking skills are generally ambiguous and arise from the Western sociocultural traditions rather than universal standards of higher learning (Hu, 2017). My findings agree with Bourn's (2021) view that at the centre of developing critical thinking skills is the ability to question the students' own worldview and recognising different perspectives. On one hand, Chinese students appear to lack critical thinking which originated from Western philosophy and epistemology. On another hand, I argue that Chinese international students have a relatively more global outlook and

understanding of diversity than most Western students, because Chinese sojourners have immersive experience in both Eastern and Western society while most Western students have no contact with the eastern culture. Existing literature (e.g. Hu, 2017; Wang, 2021) seems to ignore this point and tends to claim that Chinese students have narrower viewpoints than Westerners.

Furthermore, Bourn (2018) addresses the importance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century graduate to understand existing systems worldwide and critically reflect on their place in the world. Regarding such critical reflection on global issues and systems, many Chinese students demonstrate their ability to comprehend perspectives from both Chinese and Western media and realise both sides have their political and ideological standpoint. However, Western students might not be able to recognise the rationale of the Chinese worldview. Much of the research (e.g. Durkin, 2008, Zhu & O'Sullivan, 2020) on Chinese student thinking and learning styles tend to claim their limitations in making arguments and comprehending global events, but my research found this assumption to be misleading. In my research, Chinese students actually appear to have more insights on the fundamental differences and conflicts between the West and East through reflecting on their experiences abroad, when compared to Western students who don't make an effort to see the world from China's viewpoint. Moreover, the majority of the participants reported the increased scope, depth and complexity in their viewpoints while valuing critical thinking as a lifelong endeavour. The student's overall improvement in critical thinking resonates with Bourn (2018), which highlights the contemplation of various worldviews, an understanding of the complexity, difference and similarity between different cultures and society, and an ability to analyse global and local issues critically.

#### **6.4.3 Personal growth**

Although students had both pleasant and difficult times, the overall findings reveal many positive outcomes of their personal growth related to adaptability, independence and confidence, which are essential skills for living in a globalised society. Throughout the longitudinal interviews, students report significant improvement on inner resilience

to deal with new challenges and increased self-awareness and self-directedness, which Tran (2012) describes as a form of adaptation and growth through living in a new multicultural environment. This development in life skills can be explained by Mezirow (1997) that when being placed independently in a challenging context, learners become more self-reflective, autonomous, flexible to change and inclusive of other communities. Taylor (2008) believes personal growth happening in this way can form lifelong habits of empowerment and confidence even after students return to their home country. Indeed, my findings echo many studies (e.g. Moskal & Schweisfurth, 2018) on international students' personal growth during living in new settings and confirm the fact that such development often leads to the students' self-discovery and adaptation to living in a globalised society.

My findings acknowledge that the students' difficulties and challenges during study and living in the UK, especially during the special time of the pandemic, significantly contribute to their transformative learning in terms of gaining self-awareness and self-reliance. In particular, the findings emphasise that Chinese international students are not passively impacted by negative conditions but rather are capable of adjusting themselves in the new environment and making positive meaning of what they could learn from the obstacles they faced. The interview results demonstrate strong evidence of how the students gain different sets of life skills through conquering emotional stress and physical restrictions during lockdown to look after themselves and keep up with their master's study process. As Tran (2012) argued that international students' process of becoming global citizens is a dynamic interplay between challenges and transformative power. Indeed, study abroad is intimately linked to opportunities for self-transformation, and the challenging experiences that Chinese students go through foster the conditions for personal development and life-enhancing changes to take place. As Taylor (1994) explained, international students often adapt to and shift their perspectives in order to accommodate the new experience and integrate into the host environment.

The personal growth during study abroad empowered the students with greater autonomy, which is one of the benefits of transformational learning addressed by Mezirow (2000). The students' transformative power of developing independence and confidence is closely linked to their process of becoming a global citizen (Yang, 2018).

My findings illustrate the students' evolution in attitudes and personal qualities through the process of critical self-reflection and adaptation to the uncertainty and complexity of globalisation. As Baker and Fang (2019) claimed, the central part of global citizenship development is students' transformation into a new person due to their experiences of living in the international environment. Such personal transformation also has continuous and long-lasting impacts even after students have returned to China (Gu, 2015). It is also noticeable that a number of factors may affect this personal growth process, including the students' motivations, personalities, past experience and social context. By citing narratives of students' accounts on their self-transformation through gaining life skills, my findings also show how the students may become promoters of study abroad to their Chinese peers through testimonials of personal growth and increased confidence.

#### **6.4.4 Academic skills**

My findings demonstrate that all the participants have gained academic skills, including subject knowledge, reading and writing skills, analytical thinking and groupwork skills through both attending classes and out-of-class autonomy learning. The learning activities include class discussion, reading material, coursework and dissertations, and communication with tutors. All the participants sensed the obvious contrast of the teaching and learning style between the UK and China in regards to curriculum, pedagogy, classroom discussion, relationship with their teachers and coursework. My study confirms that despite the West's enormous influence on China's contemporary education system, the study skills and learning styles of Chinese students remain vastly different from British students, mainly due to cultural differences (Zheng, 2014; Wu, 2015). Nevertheless, while admitting their lack of study skills to fully adapt to the British education system, all participants showed strong willingness to improve their academic performance and reported increasing capability to keep up with their curriculum thereby completing their master's degree.

Many students indicated a lack of confidence and a sense of marginalisation during their classroom discussions and in teamwork, which was frequently associated with their communication and learning skills to adapt to the Western pedagogy. As

explained by Baker and Fang (2019) that Chinese students are less talkative than Western students due to a lack of proficiency in English and a lack of knowledge about the focus of discussions, which are frequently centred as the problem of their study skills in the international context. This finding is reflected by several studies (e.g. Li, 2012; Ying, 2018) on Chinese students' academic skills, which reported their lack of voice and ideas to contribute in the classroom. However, some students mentioned their discomfort and reluctance to speak up in class were due to their learning habits that emphasise active listening and avoid sharing their unsure opinions which might waste the time of their classmates, which has also been reported by several other studies (e.g. Liu, 1992; Zhu & O'Sullivan, 2020). The students also acknowledge that their way of silent learning often led to misunderstandings rather than mutual dialogue (Durkin, 2008). Moreover, as Moskal and Schweisfurth (2018) pointed out, international students feel not just the difficulty of communicating across languages and cultural divides, but also underlying prejudices rooted in the Western ideology which undermine the Eastern students' learning approach. In this sense, my findings identify that participation in the class discussions and the ability to express their thoughts in front of international others is a crucial academic skill which Chinese students find it challenging to develop.

Nevertheless, the majority of the students exhibited their transformation from silent information receivers who never spoke up about their thoughts in class to active learners who actively engaged in conversation and collaboration. This improvement resonates with Bourn's (2018) address on the global skill of dialogic learning, through which learners interact with each other to make meaning and co-create knowledge. Just as Friar (2016) points out that open dialogue and reflection integrated in the pedagogy proved to have a powerful influence on students' formation of global citizenship, my study confirms that the students' active learning and discussion is a self-reflective stage of transformative learning towards GC development. Meanwhile, the academic skills Chinese students developed mirror the Western learning approach, which involves activities like exploration, inquiry, critical thinking, communication, self-expression and active participation in the world (Mansilla & Wilson, 2020). My findings also indicate that the academic skills for global citizens require Chinese students to make a change from the traditional rote learner with an attitude of conformity and being exam-oriented (Zheng, 2014) to learners with autonomy, self-direction and self-



expression. Therefore, as one participant stated, study abroad can enable students to become global citizens with not only subject knowledge and international qualifications, but also the ability to better evaluate and construct new knowledge that benefits global society.

#### **6.4.5 Social participation**

In my research, the social participation skill refers to students' ability to connect, engage and participate in the global community, which indicates their relationship and responsibility as members of social groups. The majority of interviewees (17 out of 19) reported significant improvement in their social engagement skills through joining student societies, volunteering, taking up part-time job, protesting, attending church, engaging in networking events and using social media since they arrived in the UK. In contrast to some studies (e.g. Chen, 2011; Hu, 2017) that report Chinese students don't have a strong interest in out-of-class activities and are unlikely to see improvements in their social skills in relation to participating in the local community, making social change and advocating global justice outside China, my findings reveal strong evidence that some students had gained the skill of active social engagement through witnesses and participating in social movement both within their universities and in the wider communities in the UK. This finding also echoes Friar (2016) that participation and reflective practice in the international and host community have a positive association with students' global citizenship development, regardless of programme duration. In this sense, international mobility can be a type of immersive learning to develop Chinese students' all-rounded skills, in which students engage with global society through not only attending classes but also participating in various forms of social activities.

As the literature review demonstrates, Chinese students' self-improvement in learning and career was a prominent research subject, but the improvement of participation in social affairs and communities was far less discussed. Previous research (e.g. Yu & Moskal, 2019) mentioned most Chinese students have a lack of opportunity and context to develop skills for participation and engagement with the wider community

in the host country. However, my findings explain that the lack of social engagement in the host society is mainly due to students' personality traits and values on GC instead of limitations in their environment. There is clear evidence that between two participants from the same social setting (university, major and accommodation), one demonstrated a high level of proactive social participation, while the other reported no interest and experience in any out-of-class activities. Moreover, a tiny proportion of students did not want to improve their engagement skills, because they considered obtaining academic qualification to be the main aim for study abroad so that participation in community activities was not necessary. In contrast to a study on Chinese students' social participation by Baker and Fan (2019), which raised some concerns that students may form negative impressions on other cultures and feel less motivated to improve engagement skills during study abroad, my findings show a positive correlation between the students' participation activities and willingness to further develop relevant skills.

My findings provide rich evidence that many Chinese students are interested in global issues and social justice, such as environmental protection, racial equality, freedom of speech, human rights and fairness within political systems. With such interests, the majority of participants reported their effort and involvement in various student societies and community activities to improve their engagement skills. Those students demonstrated their "confidence, belief and willingness to seek a more just and sustainable world", which Bourn (2018, p.129) describe as a vital global skill to build a participatory global society within which individuals can express their voice and influence policy making. Indeed, many students realised the possibility of individual agency in identifying global issues and conducting ethical behaviour to foster a more harmonious society. However, my findings also reflect the fact that Chinese students tend to be more sceptical and uncertain about their capability to control their surroundings, improve conditions and make social change than their Western counterparts (Mansilla & Wilson, 2020). This might due to China's political system which emphasises collective conformity instead of individual change, and the Chinese pedagogical approach which is centred on delivering knowledge for taking exams instead of cultivating learners' participatory awareness and skills. Nevertheless, study in the UK provides many Chinese students with the opportunity to realise their agency

and improve their global engagement skills so that they can identify more global issues and have more responsibility to inform social change.

#### **6.4.6 Digital literacy**

According to Bourn (2018), digital literacy is a vital global skill for contemporary global citizens. It includes not only the ability to effectively use and understand the value of information communication technology (ICT), but also the aptitude to evaluate information in “a way that is self-reflective and critical” (Bourn 2018, p. 128). That means to be truly digital literate, Chinese students need technical skills to operate ICT and cognitive skills to analyse, compare and interpret information from various sources. My research shows that all the students had some level of improvement in the skill of using Western social media to connect with others, accessing international news platforms and online learning during pandemic. This is reflected in Mansilla and Wilson (2020), in that the desire to understand the world beyond their national boundary, the global digital skill enables Chinese students to extend their worldview and connect with people outside their immediate environment. Due to the constraints of accessing Western media such as BBC and international social media such as YouTube and Twitter in China, the study abroad experience provides students with a unique opportunity to develop digital skills to adapt to internet usage within the Western context. Students can thereby inquire about the world outside China and investigate different perspectives beyond what they used to know from China’s online resources.

The findings prove that this generation of Chinese students is growing up in the world of internet technologies, thereby having digital skills for multiple ways of learning and social networking by using a range of Chinese online platforms and mobile apps. As Mok et al (2017) observe, due to their familiarity with ICT, young Chinese students could easily reach out to international news and become connected to the global world. However, my findings show that although the students had good digital skills before coming to the UK, they didn’t have enough opportunity to access global media and online platforms. I also discovered that China’s mobile apps, such as WeChat and Sina Weibo, tend to undermine Chinese students’ aspirations to adapt and integrate

into their new host contexts. All the Chinese students tended to keep frequent contact with their family and friends through using Chinese mobile networks. Although continuous use of Chinese social media can significantly reduce the students' feeling of loneliness during their study in the UK, this habit largely reduced the level of improvement in global digital literacy. Moreover, as digital literacy includes the capacity to question and reflect on data and information (Bourn, 2018), the participants who actively used Western social media, such as Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter, demonstrated a higher level of ability to evaluate information from different sources than their peers who rely only on Chinese media.

In conclusion, this part of the discussion has reflected on how Chinese students acquired six sets of global skills in the journey of becoming global citizens. To begin with, the students develop cultural awareness and communication skills through engaging with people from various backgrounds on campus and in the wider UK community, therefore improving their cosmopolitan competency. Secondly, students acquire critical thinking skills by identifying other perspectives and challenging their previous worldviews. Thirdly, students acquire self-awareness and resilience as a result of facing challenges in a new environment, resulting in increased adaptability, independence, and confidence. Fourthly, students develop academic abilities such as reading and writing skills, critical thinking, class debate, and groupwork by adopting the British education system. Fifthly, students' capacity to interact and engage improve as a result of participating in numerous out-of-class activities. Finally, students develop global digital literacy skills through accessing Western social media and online learning. All six skill themes are combined into a global skillset that enables Chinese students to better live, engage, study, work, participate in, and contribute to the global community.

### **6.5. Transformative Outcome of GC Development (Main RQ)**

This research agrees with the previous studies (e.g. Kishino & Takahashi, 2019) that find international mobility has a profound impact on students' knowledge, values and skills in relation to GC. However, the Chinese students' GC development manifested itself not only with regards to employability, intercultural communication and critical

thinking, but also to reconstructing their position in a globalised world. On one hand, my research reflects students' changing values and attitude on a sense of being global citizens and making sense of globalisation. On the other hand, the findings identify six type of global skills Chinese students had developed during their study abroad journey, included interculture skills, personal growth, social engagement, academic skills, critical thinking and digital literacy. These values and skills are not only the attributes graduates need to effectively engage in societies and economies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Kraska, Bourn, & Blum, 2018), but also valuable capabilities that enable the students to fully realise their potential in a globalised world. In addition, coping with the pressure of living in the UK during COVID-19 stimulated the Chinese students' GC development.

The main research question, as how the study abroad experience influences Chinese students' perceptions of being global citizens, is answered through applying the theoretical framework which integrates Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1996) and the three lenses of GC (Bourn, 2015) into my research. This part of the discussion interprets all the findings in the lenses of the three approaches to GC development (neoliberal, cosmopolitan and critical) which are described in the literature review. These three lenses echo Mezirow's (1996) construct of three types of transformative learning outcomes, namely instrumental (knowledge application and problem solving), communicative (engage with others and maintain relationship) and emancipatory (aware of the existing system and willing to make a change). As such, with reference to Bourn (2011), I interpret how studying abroad influences GC firstly in relation to their employability, secondly in relation to intercultural communication and thirdly in relation to making sense of the world.

### **6.5.1 GC for working in a global economy**

At the beginning of their study abroad journey, all the students showed strong intention to increase their employability and competitiveness after returning to China. Many students used the metaphor of "fast track to increase employability" and "short-cut to a better job" to express their motivation for overseas study. This resonates with some scholars' conceptualising international education as a commodity which enables students to be competitive in the global marketplace (Kraska, Bourn, & Blum, 2018). Given the reality of China's economic growth and fierce competition in its job market,

it is not surprising that Chinese students were primarily driven by the need of enhancing career development and consolidating social status. In terms of career development, the growing number of Chinese international students is closely related to the region's strong cultural belief that study abroad experience boosts employability (Cai, 2008; Wu, 2015). The findings confirm that the experience of studying abroad is considered to be essential cultural capital to secure a good position in the workforce. In this sense, my findings echo the statement that "international students are becoming more interested in gaining a tangible return on their tuition investment, which can often be measured in their ability to secure employment after graduation" (Esaki-Smith, 2020, p.25).

The findings demonstrate that the majority of students felt more confident and advantaged in China's job market at the end of their master's programme. Students believed their UK master's degree serves as a "signal" which indicates their ability to work in multinational companies and international institutions in China. It can be argued that many students have been transformed into employees qualified to work in multicultural companies in China after studying in the UK. Most students claimed the GC in terms of global outlook and skills they gained from study abroad has directly enhanced their employability, especially enabling them to work in an international context such as within foreign companies and international schools. This finding is in line with the results of a recent large-scale survey by China's top study abroad agency, New Oriental, that 89 percent of employers in China agreed that employees with an international education background have a much higher chance to be hired and promoted, due to their enhanced professional skills and global mindset to solve problems (White Book of Study Abroad, 2020). The findings also confirm that more and more employers in China require job candidates to have global outlook which is formed through international experiences such as overseas study and work experience in multinational companies. The desired global outlook in China's job market was perceived as English skills, intercultural communication skills and problem solving with critical thinking skills, which is similar to Kraska, Bourn and Blum's (2018) perception of what international employers defined as a global outlook.

With the increasing demand from employers to have a global outlook and competencies beyond disciplinary knowledge and national boundaries, the students

changed their attitudes on their future career prospects and deepened their understanding of the global knowledge economy. As Lilley, Barker and Harris (2015) stated, students consider their career beyond narrow expectations with a more mature attitude after overseas study. Chinese students demonstrate an increasing level of responsibility toward themselves and their future plans. To work in a global economy, “just being knowledgeable is a recipe for narrowness” (Kraska, Bourn, & Blum, 2018, p.85). Apart from learning subject knowledge and gaining qualifications, all the students confirmed they had acquired some soft skills which were desirable by employers in China. These skills include adaptability, time management skills and teamwork skills. However, Mok, Han, Jiang, and Zhang (2017) argued that because most Chinese international students come from advantaged family backgrounds and attain jobs through their social connections, there might not be a direct relationship between international mobility and career development.

According to the literature review, neoliberalism has been a dominant force within international mobility. My findings offer some insights as to how the values of capitalism have influenced Chinese students’ GC development. When some students spoke about what is a global citizen, they cited international businessmen such as Jack Ma and Bill Gates as their role models, because contemporary Chinese society is largely influenced by the neoliberal idea of “money is power”. This appeared to be the case for Students 1, 6 and 11 who linked GC to “the capability of getting a top-paid job in global mega companies”. It seemed that all the students who showed a strong sense of neoliberalism in relation to GC were male students who considered increasing employability as their primary goal of overseas study. In contrast, there was no female student who viewed GC as making money and competing globally. This phenomenon could be explained by Hu’s (2017) argument that Chinese female international students value the gain of acculturation more than capitalisation due to China’s traditional view that men have more financial responsibility than women. It can be argued that the majority of Chinese female students didn’t view GC through a neoliberal lens which associates GC with the concept of a “global elite” with the power and privilege to benefit from better job positions and social class.

In contrast to scholars (e.g. Marginson, 2021) who view neoliberalism as a contradiction to education as a public good, a conflict to cosmopolitan values and a threat to social equality and justice, my research finds internationalised HE provides many Chinese students with valuable opportunities to enjoy better quality education abroad and to potentially become global citizens. Some scholars (e.g. Esaki-Smith, 2020) criticised the fact that Western universities welcome Chinese students as one of their key strategies for internationalisation with the main aim of increasing revenues. Ironically, Chinese students realised that this type of marketisation of higher education and their consuming power of being able to afford the cost of studying in the UK became the condition and tool to develop GC. As Student 11 quoted, if the UK's universities didn't want to "sell education as a product" and he didn't have money to "pay for this product", he would not have a chance to become a global citizen. It became apparent that Chinese international students thanked their universities' initiative to commercialise educational programmes, which offered them a special opportunity to engage in the global society. Otherwise, as Feng (2011) argued, there was no other chance in China for people to truly understand GC besides travelling abroad. While Western students can choose to travel abroad if they want to, Chinese students cannot go abroad freely without solid financial conditions (Wu, 2015). Moreover, just as Student 19 said, "you can't have a global outlook if you don't have money to pay for the experience". The students also recognised that their journey of becoming global citizens through international mobility was backed up by their social-economic status. In this sense, Chinese students' neoliberal values laid the foundation for them to develop cosmopolitan values and cultivate social responsibility.

It is important to note that more than half of the Chinese students had the hope of being able to work in the UK after graduation and were disappointed that they had no such opportunity at the end of their postgraduate programme. As literature on Chinese international students (e.g. Wu, 2015; Mok, 2020) has explained, this desire is rooted in China's job market which values not only overseas degrees but also work experience abroad. In contrary to Rizvi's (2007) assertion that Western universities focus on producing "global workers" with knowledge, skills and attitudes for employment worldwide, Chinese students found British universities failed to provide them with relevant knowledge and platforms for work opportunities outside China. In this sense, the study abroad experience might not transform Chinese students into



“global workers” but instead into “more competitive employees in China”. In other words, with the global skills of intercultural communication, critical thinking and adaptability, the students felt they were well prepared for the complexity and fast changing economy in China, yet not adequately able to be granted a working visa in Western countries. At this point, as a few students reflected that, unlike Western graduates who can find jobs anywhere in the world, Chinese international students can’t be truly global citizens unless they have the right and choice to work globally.

From the literature review and my findings, it became apparent that Chinese students expect to improve their GC in terms of global outlook and intercultural competence beyond international employability. This can lead to a contradiction where universities only recognise international students' economic and marketing potential while failing to offer the appropriate support to improve their study abroad experience. This results in a negative change in global outlook and perceived quality of the education abroad. The negative change in global outlook occurs as a result of the student's unwillingness to immerse themselves in the host country and change their perspectives. Moreover, the universities and job market tend to place an economic value on being global citizens. Accordingly, many Chinese students view GC and global outlook from a narrow elitist approach. This negativity may have long-term impact on the students' worldview and international awareness after they return China. As such some Chinese students might misunderstand or ignore GC during their study abroad journey and professional life.

### **6.5.2. GC for engaging people from different cultures**

In the cosmopolitan approach to GC discussed in the literature review, the main purpose of GC development is to transform students' perspectives from nationalism and ethnocentrism into an awareness of cultural pluralism (Strange & Gibson, 2017). The findings indicate that Chinese students not only benefit the UK's economy as consumers of international higher education, but also contribute to British society

through actively engaging in cultural exchange and community service, such as participating in volunteer work, teaching Chinese, joining students' unions, attending local churches and taking part in protests. These findings in relation to Chinese students' social engagement confirm with Gu and Schweisfurth's (2015) perception that one of the most profound changes of Chinese international students through studying in the UK is their enhanced cosmopolitan values and competencies. Indeed, most students made an effort to demonstrate their shifted cosmopolitan values as a deeper understanding of other cultures and willingness to step outside their previous worldview. Chinese students' gained cosmopolitan values can be manifested in Bourn (2018, p.125) as "a sense of solidarity and empathy with people elsewhere in the world, to move consciously from a narrow, nationalistic and inward-looking view of the world".

Unlike some studies (e.g. Morais & Odgen, 2011) that quantitatively measured GC as a degree of social engagement based on the score of students' responsibility and civic activity, my research explores students' own narratives of their feelings and reflections on their participation in social activities. As Taylor (1998) suggested, transformative learning can be achieved only through active participation and purposeful action, and students in my research became more integrative of their study abroad experience. Beyond gaining awareness of other cultures and improving their intercultural skills, most students reflected on their development of self-consciousness and understanding of their own Chinese culture. As "no understanding of others is possible without self-understanding" (Lilley, Barker & Harris, 2015), the students had a great opportunity to comparatively understand ourselves and others during their daily communication abroad.

When asked about their interpretation of what a global citizen is, openness and inclusiveness were the most quoted value of GC among Chinese students. All the students appeared to display a common-sense approach to cosmopolitanism in relation to mutual understanding and respect. This is in line with Appiah's (2006) consideration of cosmopolitanism as a moral value which promotes a sense of understanding otherness and the ethic of co-existence. Many students quoted the concept of "community of a shared future for mankind" as China's vision of GC. The students emphasised their sense of a "collective responsibility" for everyone in the world. This responsibility included the need to treat people the same way they want to

be treated, a sense of the possibility of unity, active participation and social engagement, and a need to protect the environment. The students' reflection on their journey of building connections with global society as the cosmopolitan value of GC stands in opposition to neoliberal forces of individualism and competition and creates a sense of belonging and unity of a global community.

It is also notable that, although Chinese students became more open and empathetic towards cosmopolitan others, they still preferred to befriend and felt more comfortable with their Chinese peers. In this case, most students still sense their Chinese identity stronger than their feeling of belonging to a global community. Compared with Western students who gained "cosmopolitan hospitality" through study abroad (Lilley, Barker & Harris, 2015, p.237), Chinese students didn't display an increasing willingness and hospitable action to foreigners they met in the UK. On the contrary, the students found that they much preferred to stay with other Chinese students, although they didn't mind communicating with foreigners occasionally. As such, Chinese students hardly established deep connections and friendships with others who did not speak Chinese. This might due to the "very different culture and social structure of China" (S10) and "isolated media platforms in China" (S7) making Chinese students lack common interests and topics with people outside China. However, a few Chinese students still managed to maintain meaningful connections with non-Chinese people. For instance, Student 14 who only socialised with non-Chinese students "found true love and connection" with her British boyfriend she met in her university. In contrast to most students who felt they always belong to the Chinese social group, those few students who found deep connections with non-Chinese people demonstrated their cosmopolitan value of "belonging to everywhere".

In sum, Chinese students formed the cosmopolitan values of GC which resonates with the literature (e.g. Moskal & Schweisfurth, 2018) on the ethical and cultural disposition of global citizens. Those values include openness, inclusiveness, respect and appreciation towards others. However, the majority of students didn't show a strong willingness to step out of their immediate circle of Chinese peers.

### **6.5.3. GC for making sense of the globalised world**

Apart from enhanced employability and intercultural competency, my findings demonstrate that gaining consciousness of critical thinking is the main impact of study abroad in students' personal and professional life. This type of critical consciousness, as described by Dirkx (1998), enables students to analyse, evaluate, question and challenge the social, cultural, political and economic conditions that influence their lives. According to Paulo Freire (1970), this process of raising consciousness facilitates students' understanding of existing social structures and transforms how they sense themselves and the world, thereby making better sense of the globalised world.

The findings show the students' approach to sensing and making meaning of the globalised world were facilitated by confronting different perspectives through intercultural communication, participating in social activities and the use of global media. While there is a similarity between Chinese international students' and Western sojourners' critical reflections on GC in respect of understanding the complexity and interconnection of globalisation, there exist remarkable distinctions in Chinese students' sense of themselves in the world and views of the structure of the world. The students described their realisation of the variety and complexity of the world much more than they could imagine when they were in China's homogenous society. Through encountering people from different backgrounds and assessing global media, the students comprehended the diversity and multiplicity of others in respect of knowledge, perspectives, languages, religions, customs and so on. Indeed, GC can be demonstrated as the students' awareness and reflection of themselves, the world and their place within it (Kraska, Bourn, & Blum, 2018). Lilley, Barker and Harris (2015) also viewed criticality, relationality and reflexivity as essential cognitive and moral capacities for students to engage in the "interconnected nature of a globalized existence" (p. 227). Indeed, many students demonstrate their shifting from dualistic epistemologies to critical reflection on difference of culture, social and political systems.

My literature review argues that leading scholars in the field of global education (Shultz, 2010; Bourn, 2018) view GC development as a process for not only equipping students with employability and cultivating a sense of cosmopolitan belonging, but also critically

reviewing and challenging the existing systems and structures of the world. The findings from the interviews offer strong evidence that at the end of their study abroad journey, the participants claimed they had critically reflected on their own values and perspectives, sensed the interdependency of globalisation, explored the possibility of social activism, and developed their own position and new identity in the globalised world. This is in line with Bourn's (2014) description of the key elements of global learning for social change, which embodied a critical approach for GC. The students challenged their previous knowledge of China's society and their views on the Western world. The majority of students reported their changed conception of political participation and opinions on democracy. Some students posed questions and criticised the Western-centric values of democracy and individual freedom. They argued that there were many drawbacks of Western political systems which they used to assume as being superior to China's communist values. At the same time, they also recognised the problem of China's ruling system which suppressed freedom of speech and inhibited the use of global media. Those changes took place when students sensed the possibility of expressing their own voice on social conflict such as getting their tuition fees refunded during COVID-19. Some students became involved in active debates on a range of controversial global issues.

In accordance with Paulo Freire's (1970) advocacy of learning as emancipatory and liberating, the students demonstrated a transformation in ontology that they reconstructed their identity as global citizens with Chinese characteristics; in epistemology they perceived the complexity of the world around them; in praxis they proactively participated in social movements. In other words, through the approach of critical reflection and activism, the students became a new form of global citizens who represent China's unique tradition to participate in a global society. Moreover, as the students addressed, this transformation was not contradictory to their Chinese citizenship, but deepened their sense of being a responsible Chinese citizen who should "make China better understood by the world and Chinese better understand the world" (S19). Moreover, the evidence of Chinese students' passion and efforts in social justice and activism was an unanticipated finding. Some scholars (Kraska, Bourn & Blum, 2018) explained that students' critical reflections on their position in the world at large can trigger a sense of responsibility within them to act both individually and collectively for global justice. Apart from gaining an understanding of the world

outside China, the students considered the shift of their identity and responsibility as a result of a reformed understanding of themselves as a remarkable global skill they gained.

## **Conclusion**

Through studying abroad, Chinese students showed strong desire and demand to become global citizens who are able to learn, communicate and participate in an increasingly interconnected world. However, there are very few studies on Chinese international students' global citizenship development. My research explores the impact of international mobility on Chinese sojourners' values and skills, which enable them to think and act as global citizens. The findings demonstrate that the experience of study in the UK could potentially transform participants into various types of global citizens in relation to neoliberalism, cosmopolitan and with strong critical reflection skills. The findings suggest that GC in terms of global outlook and global skills were highly valued by Chinese students and employers in China. Overseas study was deemed to be an effective way to gain such a form of GC. The experience abroad not only provided students with neoliberal values of employability and competitive advantages, but also with cosmopolitan skills of social engagement and critical reflection on their own place in the world. All three aspects of GC play important roles in students' personal and professional development. On the foundation of universities' internationalisation and their families' economic conditions, Chinese international students had integrated cosmopolitan values, developed critical reflection and brought social activism into their study abroad experience.

Overall, this chapter shows that the study abroad experiences with critical reflection on oneself, others and the world, frequent intercultural communication and proactive social participation effectively triggers and facilitates GC development. The outcomes of students' GC development have a profound impact on their global outlook, career plan, lifestyle, sense of self in the world and social responsibility. However, some students' GC development was limited by their lack of opportunity and interest in expanding their social network. The next chapter concludes all the findings and provides clear answers to the research questions with further recommendations.

## Chapter 7. Conclusion and Recommendation

### Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between Chinese international students' global citizenship (GC) and their study abroad experience in light of transformative theory. I perceive GC as an umbrella term, which consists of students' value and skills to live in a globalised world of diversity, complexity and uncertainty. My research shows that study abroad experiences with critical reflection (on oneself, others and the world), frequent intercultural communication, purposeful engagement with wider society and proactive social participation effectively triggers and facilitates GC development. Previous chapters provide rich evidence that the transformative experience of study abroad has expanded Chinese students' global outlook and attitudes, and enhanced their skills in relation to employment, intercultural communication, personal growth, social engagement, digital literacy and critical thinking. As a result of this profound transformation, the students have reconstructed their social-cultural identities and improved competencies which enable them to better make sense of the globalised world and act with new sets of global skills.

The thesis is formed by seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the research's purpose and provides an outline of the overall study. The literature review was presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Chapter 2 explored the background of the research through positioning GC and international mobility in the context of globalisation, internationalisation of higher education and the significance of a large number of Chinese students studying abroad. Chapter 3 constructed the conceptual model of GC through three lenses (cosmopolitan, neoliberal, and critical pedagogy), explained Transformative Learning Theory and examined a number of relevant studies in my research field. Chapter 4 offered details of my research design and methodology, in which I described the rationale and process of this qualitative, longitudinal study. Chapter 5 explored the findings from three sets of interviews with 19 participants and two questionnaires to understand how Chinese students perceive their GC development throughout their overseas journey. Chapter 6 interpreted the findings based on previous literature and discusses multiple perspectives for answering each research question.

This chapter integrates all the previous chapters to present clear answers to my research questions and to offer recommendations based on the findings and discussion. The main research question is how do study abroad experiences influence Chinese students' perceptions of being global citizens? To shed light on the main question, four sub-questions were developed to link together the research problem, purpose, design and findings:

Q1: To what extent do Chinese students consider becoming global citizens as a motivation to study abroad?

Q2: What experiences trigger and facilitate students' learning towards becoming global citizens? To what extent are these experiences transformative?

Q3: What are the changes in students' perception of GC through study abroad?

Q4: What are the perceived global skills students develop through study abroad?

The four questions serve as main themes to present the motivations, experiences, change of values and improvement of skills through international education. These subsequent questions shaped my data collection, analyses and implication. Through in-depth exploration of students' own perceptions and reflections on their study abroad experiences, all the four research questions were explored comprehensively through the literature review, findings and discussion chapters. The next section concludes on how my research interprets all the research questions, followed by proposing recommendations, clarifying the importance of my research for contribution to the body of knowledge and a final reflection on my study.

## **7.1. Research Questions Answered**

This part of the conclusion follows the same order as the findings and discussion chapters to answer my research through addressing five areas: 1) Students' motivation of studying in the UK in relation to becoming global citizens (Q1); 2) The



experiences which trigger and facilitate the students' transformative learning journey towards becoming global citizens (Q2); 3) The change of participants' values and attitudes on GC, understandings of globalisation, and sense of self in the world (Q3); 4) The improvement of relevant skills to live in a globalised society (Q4); 5) The overall influence of international mobility on Chinese students' GC development.

### **7.1.1 Q1: The motivation of GC development**

*To what extent do Chinese students consider becoming global citizens as a motivation to study abroad?*

My findings confirm with the literature in international mobility that Chinese students' motivation for studying in the UK has been associated with social mobility and economic status, because Western cultures and modernity are still perceived as being more advanced than in China. As a result, there has been a steady growth of the population of Chinese students in British universities, which creates a market for the current internationalisation in higher education systems. In my research, Chinese students showed a strong desire to seek not only qualifications but also knowledge, skills and international experience to compete in China's current knowledge economy and engage in a wider global society. The findings from the questionnaires and interviews provide rich evidence that improving a global outlook, increasing employability to work in an international company and gaining some relevant global skills, such as intercultural competency, critical thinking and English skills, are among the top reasons for Chinese students to study abroad. But becoming a global citizen appears not to be a direct motivation for participants to pursue international education. Nevertheless, the majority of Chinese students showed strong interest in GC and viewed it as either a personal trait, type of worldview, layer of identity or capability that they would like to develop or had already possessed. Although not everyone is familiar with the term GC, all the students have some understanding of its related terms, such as global/international outlook and global competency.

The Chinese students who participated in this research appear to be a diverse group from various backgrounds with different life experiences and career prospects. As such, their motivations for studying abroad and desire to become global citizens were

varied. A theme that emerges clearly from the findings is that many students already had some understanding of Western culture and ideas about GC before their study abroad experience, due to their extensive international experience in China and through overseas travelling. My research shows that before studying in the UK, many Chinese students already realised the complexity of the globalised world and the possibility of having different layers of identity at a local, national and global level. Analysis of my findings uncovers that Chinese students' motivation of gaining GC through studying abroad was generated by their previous international experience, personal interest in western culture, career ambitions and family background. Such motivation for becoming global citizens seems to be a product of the students' existing global outlook before study abroad, not its prerequisite. In other words, students who were motivated to develop GC through study abroad demonstrated that they already had some understanding of GC and aspiration of a global outlook before studying in the UK. Moreover, students' motivation of becoming global citizens seems to positively influence the quality of their study abroad experience.

### **7.1.2 Q2: Transformative learning experience for GC development**

*What experiences trigger and facilitate students' learning towards becoming global citizens? To what extent are these experiences transformative?*

This research approaches Chinese students' trajectory of becoming global citizens through exploring various types of experiences that lead to a change of perspectives and improvement of global skills. Based on the analysis of participants' narratives and self-reflection on their academic experiences and social activities, I identified six types of experience that contribute to GC development, including being out of their comfort zone, encountering otherness, pedagogical adjustment, social participation, accessing global media and COVID-19. My findings reveal that many Chinese students made efforts to manifest their cosmopolitan values as a sense of openness, inclusiveness and willingness to engage in the international community. The students not only benefited the UK's economy as consumers of international higher education, but also contributed to British society through proactively engaging in cultural exchange and community service, such as participating in volunteer work, teaching Chinese, joining students' unions, attending local churches, taking part in protests and using global

social media. In addition, my research finds the experience of witnessing social movements, confronting mistreatment/discrimination and promoting Chinese culture are meaningful ways for students to develop their sense of understanding of GC. Such findings have not been discussed in the existing literature. Furthermore, the majority of the participants showed a belief in social justice and took action to express their voices.

Through integrating key components of Transformative Learning Theory with students' lived experiences and elements of GC, my research shows study abroad can be an all-rounded educational and social-cultural transformative learning experience which triggers and facilitates GC development. One of the overarching purposes of transformative learning and GC development is to move Chinese students away from the perspective of ethnocentrism and dualistic epistemologies, thereby allowing the creation of a new frame of reference that promotes cultural pluralism and provides a deeper understanding of the global system. The opportunity for global learning and perspective transformation could take place either in reality or online in both the educational setting on campus and through social participation in wider society. At the same time, students' own agencies and efforts on self-reflection and social participation are the key driving forces of their transformation and GC development. The participants who made more effort in social engagement showed higher levels of comprehension of cosmopolitan values and critical reflection on GC. All the external triggers within international experiences and students' own internal drives together form an interrelated system for transformative learning towards GC. The application of TLT effectively connects all the factors and steps through Chinese students' overseas journey.

Although most participants reported profound transformative experiences on GC development, the outcomes of such experiences were various from each individual due to the differences in their backgrounds, demographics, personalities and previous international experiences. The various participants' experiences show that Chinese international students are not a unitary category but rather individuals with their own personal interests and ways of living in the UK. These individual traits and their motivation for international mobility influence how they engage in class and with the wider community, as well as in the ways they reflect on their journey abroad as

transformative experiences. University and subject of study shape their experience to some extent. Students in London have more opportunities for cultural experiences, such as visiting museums and theatres, while students in Reading and Bath have more contact with the local community, especially attending local church services. While acknowledging the vast opportunity within study abroad that triggers GC development, my findings also point out some factors which may hinder students' transformative learning. Specifically, some participants complained about the overwhelming proportion of Chinese students in their classes and accommodations, so they felt a lack of opportunity to engage with people from other nations. As such, in the recommendations section of this chapter, I propose some suggestions for universities to enhance international students' experiences in the UK.

### **7.1.3 Q3: The change of value on GC**

*What are the changes of students' perception of GC through study abroad?*

Based on the literature review on GC in higher education and the results from the in-depth interviews, my study demonstrates various changes may occur in Chinese students' perception of GC and globalisation, their global outlook and attitude and sense of self as global citizens. These changes of values, perspectives and attitudes appear to be influenced by three factors: students' willingness and openness to interact with the new environment, the quality of engagement they had in the international community and host society, and their ability to reflect on their own lived experience. The increasing awareness of GC and understanding of globalisation are consistent with previous research (e.g. Tarrant, Rubin & Stoner, 2013; Gu, 2015) in which students gained a global outlook through interacting with other cultures. However, Chinese international students' change of values in my study is largely different from that of Western sojourners in previous studies. While Western students tend to develop insights into the existing system of post-colonialism, inequality, diversity, empathy, and power imbalances between global north and south (Jooste & Heleta, 2017), Chinese students in my research show an increasing sense of openness and inclusiveness with respect and appreciation to other cultures, more willingness for social participation such as protest and freedom of speech, and better critical thinking ability as understanding global issues from the perspectives of different groups.

According to the interview results, although there appears to be ambiguity in the definition of GC and what is a global citizen, all the participants shared some commonality in their perception of GC and globalisation. This indicates that many Chinese students view GC as similar to China's prevailing ideology of "a community of common destiny for mankind" which has been officially used as the slogan in its international relationship building. As such, GC is not a notion exclusively linked to western philosophical and political ideology and manifested in international education bodies' mission statements, it also exists in China's value system, and has since ancient times, and is becoming more applicable in today's society. My research finds the elements of GC, such as having a global outlook, intercultural competence, global awareness and social justice are highly relevant to Chinese students' daily life, no matter whether in China or abroad. Chinese students' values and attitudes are intricately intertwined in the course of their GC development. The majority of Chinese students view GC as a favourable and desirable layer of identity on top of their preferred identity as "Chinese with international experience" or "overseas returnees". Moreover, the overseas experience also led Chinese international students to become more appreciative of their own cultural values and gave them a clearer understanding of how China is perceived by people from other countries.

My research shows that Chinese students' perception of GC is not only rooted in the Chinese traditional value of social harmony that embraces interdependence and collective consciousness, but also influenced by the contemporary values of cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism. On one hand, this cohort of Chinese international students has benefited from international mobility with the belief that globalisation has brought them opportunities and a new vision to live a successful and content life. The Chinese young generation also showed their expectation to live in a world of inclusiveness and diversity. On the other hand, the participants also experienced an anti-globalisation and nationalist tendency amid COVID-19. The combination of global and national identity gets complicated as they see the shortcomings of globalisation and increased state control (Wang, 2020). This ambiguity is leading to more challenges and debates in internationalisation of higher education about what type of global citizens this world truly needs and who Chinese students could possibly become. Facing this challenge, universities play a critical role, beyond teaching knowledge and issuing degrees, in offering opportunities for both home and international students to

share the value of mutual understanding and respect, to develop different perspectives and to find their place in the world.

#### **7.1.4 Q4: The development of global skills**

*What are the perceived global skills students developed through study abroad?*

My findings provide rich evidence from the results of the questionnaires and interviews that the study abroad experience can serve as a form of learning to transform students' values and attitudes, as well as an opportunity for learners to develop various global skills. My research views global skills as students' abilities to think with a global outlook, to act as global citizens and to live harmoniously in a globalised world. These global skills consist of six categories, including intercultural communication (English language skill and culture awareness), critical thinking, personal growth (adaptability, independence and confidence), academic skills, social engagement (networking and participation), and digital literacy (use of social media and online learning). All six sets of skills are perceived as highly valuable by students, family and employers, thereby enabling students to function effectively and participate proactively in a globalised society. The extent of students' perceived improvement in global skills is significantly correlated with the quality of their interactions with the hosting environment. The uneven skill development among Chinese students is not surprising given that participants reported very different types of experiences, willingness to learn new things and ability to adapt to the new environment.

All the participants showed positive perceptions of how the study abroad experience enhances the development of various global skills. Firstly, through interacting with different people from diverse backgrounds on campus and in wider UK society, Chinese students gain culture awareness and communication skills thereby increasing cosmopolitan competency; Secondly, through recognising various perspectives and questioning their previous worldview, the students develop critical thinking skills which enhance their understanding of their place in the world; Thirdly, through confronting difficulties and challenges during living in a new environment, the students' gain self-awareness and reliance leading to higher level of adaptability, independence and confidence; Fourthly, through adjusting to the British education system and pedagogy, the students improve academic skills including reading and writing, analytical thinking,

class discussion and groupwork; Fifthly, through taking part in various out-of-class activities, the students' ability to connect, engage and participate in the international community increases; Lastly, through using Western social media and online learning especially during the lockdown amid COVID-19, the students gain global digital literacy skills that enable them to access information and network without boundaries. All six themes of skills can be integrated into a global skillset that enables Chinese students to better live, engage, learn, work, participate and contribute to the interconnected world.

Furthermore, my findings indicate that participants' improvement in global skills contributes to their life-long personal development in relation to GC. These improvements include increasing concern and understanding about global issues, the value of a learner-centred approach in future learning, realising the possibility of achieving social justice through individuals' effort, confidence in being Chinese to promote Chinese cultures and value China's political ideology as not being inferior to the Western democratic system, the ability to question their own underline assumptions about themselves and others, adaptability and flexibility in different contexts, willingness to contribute to the global common good (such as environmental protection, freedom of speech, and anti-racism movements). However, my findings also argue that Chinese students need more opportunities to engage with various communities and more learning support to maximise the level of their skills improvement. Moreover, this research also implies that international students demand support in converting study abroad experiences into concrete evidence of soft skills to boost employability and being prepared for living in a complex world. In the recommendation section of this chapter, I purpose some advice for universities and students to better benefit from international mobility as a vehicle for cultivating transferable skills relevant to living in the globalised world.

#### **7.1.5 Main RQ: The influence of study abroad on GC development**

*How do study abroad experiences influence Chinese students' perceptions of being global citizens?*

Chinese students' becoming and being global citizens is a life-long learning and transformative process referred to as GC development in this research. In my study, GC is understood as an umbrella term which includes the values, attitudes and skills

that enable students to live in the globalised world. According to Bourn (2021, p. 82), GC enables students to better understand their place in the world and provides connections between local, national and global issues, thereby bridging the gap between “nationalism and globalism” that has arisen in different societies over the last few decades. My research provides rich evidence that the study abroad experience has profoundly influenced students’ GC in terms of their values, outlook, identity, capability and behaviour during study abroad and after their return to China, thus influencing the quality of their life. GC development is the result of students’ changing values and skills’ improvement, which manifests in three areas: working in a global economy, engaging people from different cultures and making sense of the globalised world (Bourn, 2018). On one hand, the students gained a broadened global outlook, with insights on globalisation and reflections on themselves in the globalised world. On other hand, they acquired valuable skills not only directly contributing to their employment, but also empowering them to act effectively in multicultural environments.

Studying abroad does not automatically turn Chinese students into global citizens, but it can be a transformative learning experience that changes perspectives and cultivates global skills, thereby enabling the participants to act as global citizens in the world. International students’ personality, motivation of international mobility, cultural awareness, attitudes to diversity, friend circles, adaptation in uncertainty, the quantity and quality of social engagement and use of social media are all reported to influence how profound the impact of study abroad is in their lives. The outcomes of students’ GC development have profound impacts on their worldview, career plan, lifestyle, sense of self in the world and social responsibility. However, some students’ GC development was limited by their lack of opportunity, capability and interest in expanding their social network and making efforts in active participation. Compared with previous studies in GC development, which claimed Western learners had realised social justice against post-colonialism, capitalism, inequality and power imbalances, Chinese students emphasised the value of openness and inclusiveness as the global attitude, which respects and appreciates diversity and social participation through protesting and freedom of speech. Chinese students also viewed critical thinking as being at the centre of GC development as an approach to interpret global issues from different viewpoints.



The outcomes of this study reveal that learners' perspectives of GC and how they engage in diverse activities are highly dynamic and individualised. Although there are some degrees of correlation of the participants' GC development experience with their university, majors, gender, age and hometown, exceptional cases appeared in all the assumed relationships. While most students studying in London tended to have more out-of-class activities than students in Bath and Reading, one student appeared to have much less social engagement despite living in central London. While most students who studied social sciences seemed to be more sensitive to cultural differences and global issues than the ones studying natural sciences, one student said she never had any interest to communicate with non-Chinese people, although she was studying TEFL and wanted to be an English teacher. While some students complained that there was not enough opportunity for GC development due to a lack of intercultural contact, others felt very satisfied with the various experiences provided by their universities and the wider community. I also notice that there appeared to be no significant correlation between the participants' GC and their age and hometown. However, gender and the subject of study had some influence on their perception of GC. Moreover, gender, age and hometown had some sort of effect on students' motivation, perception and experience, but there is no pattern to be drawn from. Therefore, the Chinese students in my research are individuals who could not be grouped by their demographic background.

GC is understood as a multidimensional construct that hinges on the interrelated dimensions of global outlook, cosmopolitan values, social responsibility and global skills. It is the presence of each of these dimensions that leads to global citizenship. The findings provide strong evidence that Chinese international students' GC development is beyond the realm of intercultural competence, cosmopolitan values and employability. The majority of the students demonstrated an open mind while actively seeking to understand others' cultural norms and leveraging their knowledge to interact and communicate effectively in the host country. Most participants recognised their own limitations and abilities for engaging in intercultural encounters. They acquired various cognitive, social and life skills to engage successfully in the new environment outside China. Some students displayed interest and knowledge about world issues and events. Some students civically contributed to volunteer work, involved in local communities and participated in social movements. Several students

showed an increasing sense of altruism and identified instances and examples of global injustice and disparity. They examined and respected diverse perspectives and constructed an ethic of social service to address global issues. Therefore, international mobility could impact Chinese students' GC through a combinative approach of neoliberalism, cosmopolitanism and critical pedagogy.

Furthermore, as previously stated, most existing research on Chinese students' international mobility emphasise their experiences of pedagogical difficulties and intercultural challenges. So that the positive influence of expanding global outlook, stimulating critical thinking and gaining global skills as a result of international experiences seems to have been overlooked. The perspective on transformative learning in my research brings a more thoughtful, positive, empowering and comprehensive understanding of the topic. In doing so, I present rich evidence of international students' various pathways and possibilities which can lead to potential transformation into global citizens. Indeed, my research reports the transformative power of international higher education and reconceptualises Chinese students as active agents who are able to critically reflect on their viewpoints and willing to contribute to global society. Through applying the framework of Transformative Learning for GC, I highlight students' positive development in values and skills throughout their study abroad. Therefore, the outcome of this study can extend to incoming Chinese international students to encourage them to participate in activities that trigger transformative learning and GC development.

## **7.2. Contributions and Limitations of the Research**

This research contributes to knowledge by drawing on the integrated findings to provide theoretical and practical insights on Chinese students' lived experiences of becoming global citizens through studying in the UK. Given the fact that Chinese international students constitute a substantial and growing mobile population globally there is little understanding about how overseas experiences impact their GC development, in terms of their values and skills to live in a globalised world. There is little focus in previous studies on how students learn to become global citizens and what triggers the transformative learning process (Braskamp et al, 2009; Blum & Bourn,

2019). As such, most literature aimed at investigating what students learnt and had improved as the outcomes of international mobility but ignored the initial causes and facilitators which provided the conditions for GC development. Unlike some scholars (e.g. Streitwieser & Light, 2016) who have questioned the unsatisfying outcome of universities' attempts for educating global citizens, I find the universities and wider society in the UK have offered Chinese international students rich experiences to develop GC, as long as they are willing to take part in various learning and social activities with critical reflection.

GC and international mobility is an interdisciplinary field that contains varied terminology, different conceptual frameworks, goals, and underlying assumptions. Given that most definitions of GC and its related terms reflect a distinctively Western perspective, it was anticipated that the findings from this research would be reflective of Chinese students' cultural backgrounds. The intention of this research is not to delineate and specify terminologies in the field of GC but to use broad conceptions of GC related elements to explore the impact of international mobility on Chinese students. The conceptual framework of GC developed in this research only provides a subjective approach to understanding study abroad as students' holistic, transformative learning journey. Thus, further research is needed to delve more deeply into the terminology used in the actual definition of GC in the field of international higher education. Nevertheless, my research offers an insightful story about international students' transformative journey towards GC. The originalities, contributions and limitations of this study are discussed in this section.

### **7.2.1 Contributions of my study**

In the new era of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education, educating global citizens or developing GC is a popular aim and outcome of international mobility promoted by universities and educational agencies with increasing demand from students and employers. Chinese students make up and will continue to be the largest group of international students in the UK. There is a need to understand Chinese students' unique learning experiences and more research is needed on how international higher education could promote their GC development. The majority of

studies on GC in international higher education have been conducted by Western scholars (e.g. Killick, 2011; Lilley, 2013; Streitwieser & Light, 2016) with a focus on Western university students' experiences. However, there is hardly any exploration on how Chinese international students relate their study abroad experiences to GC. While many researchers (e.g. Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; McGowan, 2017; Yang et al, 2020) have conducted extensive studies on Chinese international students' study abroad experiences, the potential of developing GC through international mobility has not yet appeared as a topic in their investigation and discussion. Therefore, the findings from this research will fill the knowledge gap of understanding the link between Chinese international students' experiences and their GC development through presenting students' narratives and reflections on their own stories. Moreover, the global pandemic has posed major challenges for international students and education systems worldwide to cope with increasing complexity and uncertainty in the globalised world.

GC in my research is a concept of relevance at the micro-level in understanding students' perceptions of their values and skills. At the macro-level, it is relevant to the wider aim of international higher education and the trend of globalisation. The significance of my research related to five areas: 1) The construction of GC as a conceptual framework (in Chapter 3) and The Circle of GC Development (in Chapter 6) providing a holistic picture of Chinese international students' values and skills development; 2) The creation of Framework of Transformative Learning for GC Development through Study Abroad (in Chapter 6) effectively integrates TLT into my longitudinal study, thereby offering a systematic flow to capture the triggers, processes, elements and outcomes of GC development; 3) The various and abundant sample selection of Chinese students of different majors and universities enables the consideration of different factors which influence GC development; 4) The reflection on international mobility in the special time of COVID-19 sheds light on the multiple sides of globalisation. 5) The findings go beyond both the neoliberal focus on competency for employment and cosmopolitan value of intercultural communication to explore the issues of critical pedagogy and social justice for Chinese students. This section discusses each area respectively.

Firstly, although there have been many studies on Chinese students' international mobility, very few research has linked their overseas experience with GC. The prevailing research on Chinese international students tends to focus narrowly on one or two specific topics including motivation and choice of study abroad (Wu, 2015), English language proficiency (Holmes, 2008), intercultural communication (Gu et al, 2010), pedagogical adjustment (Zhu & O'Sullivan, 2020), psychological adaptation (Yin, 2019), transnational identity (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015), professional development (Tran et al, 2021) and use of ICT/social media (Yu et al, 2019). However, I see all these themes as components of GC, relating to and affecting each other, forming all-around global learning experience. Through constructing the conceptual framework of the Global Citizen Model, which includes sets of values and skills attributed to GC, my research integrates all the critical topics on Chinese students' international mobility into one holistic picture and places this picture in the wider context of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. Furthermore, through interpreting my four research questions, I developed The Circle of GC Development in Chapter 6 to connect the motivations, experiences, elements and outcomes of GC development. This framework can serve as a reference for future researchers to understand the mechanism of GC learning.

Secondly, this research makes a significant contribution to constructing a conceptual and theoretical framework for understanding the whole process of GC development within international mobility. Through applying TLT (Mezirow, 1990) as the theoretical framework and Douglas Bourn's three approaches to GC (Bourn, 2011; Bourn, 2018) in exploring Chinese international students' GC development, I established The Framework of Transformative Learning for GC Development through Study Abroad in Chapter 6. This framework links my findings and research questions with existing theories in the context of adult education and global learning. It expands the scope of students' learning activities beyond formal educational spaces to their participation in wider international society. Accordingly, this study presents students' adaptations to and reflections on their learning and social contexts in the UK, a process which could provoke profound self-evaluation as well as potential shifts in their worldview and perception of themselves as global citizens.

Moreover, the longitudinal nature of my research allows for an analysis of students' self-reflection process at three critical points of their transformative journey throughout the whole study abroad programme. Most previous research regarding transformative learning and study abroad appears to be one-off data collection or only investigate short-term experiences (McGowan, 2017). Due to this limitation in the research design, existing literature may provide an incisive snapshot into students' learning outcomes or social interactions at a given point in time but are unable to demonstrate the substantial transformations that incur over an ongoing period of students' lived experiences abroad. Despite the increasing amount of research on international mobility, the complexity of students' learning experiences is yet to be fully understood and explained by adequate educational theories. At the same time, there is insufficient evidence and rare in-depth analyses of the processes and changes that students undergo to become global citizens within their international journey. Through this research, I hope to reveal an insightful analysis of the mechanism of students' changing perceptions on GC and how they acquire relevant skills during the process of study abroad. Instead of debating the definition of GC and internationalisation, my research aims to contribute to understanding how GC is valued, perceived and transformed into global skills from international students' experiences at different stages.

Thirdly, my study has challenged some stereotypes that previous studies tended to have towards Chinese international students. Previous stereotypes mainly include the perception that Chinese students are silent learners, lack a global outlook, suffer from language and culture barriers, are insensitive to intercultural awareness, are unable to think critically and are indifferent towards social movement. However, this research provides a rich narrative of Chinese learners from diverse backgrounds with different perspectives and various personal traits. Moreover, this research proves Chinese students' extensive experience of witnessing social movements, confronting discrimination and promoting Chinese culture as meaningful ways to develop their sense of being global citizens, which has not been discussed in previous literature on Chinese students' international experiences. As such, this study provides evidence of Chinese students' agency to make a difference in the world through participation and willingness to contribute to the global society. Chinese students share some similar understanding of GC in the feature of China's traditional values of unity and harmony,

China's current international strategy as "a community with a shared future for mankind", and neoliberal ideology reflecting a market economy. But Chinese international students form a diverse group with various motivations, interests and study abroad experiences, thereby resulting in different paths towards becoming global citizens.

Fourthly, The reflection on international mobility in the special time of COVID-19 sheds light on the multiple sides of globalisation. The pandemic started in the middle of my research project, which profoundly influenced the students' perceptions of globalisation and nationalism, as well as changed the course of the participants' study abroad programmes. My findings offer valuable insights into students' own narratives on their feelings, experiences and reflections on this global issue. On one hand, through uncovering the difficulties and challenges students faced, this study questions the effectiveness of the UK's higher education system in terms of supporting students and providing online education. On the other hand, through presenting the dramatic change of students' attitudes towards the host society and critics on the global news media, this study also reveals the underlying problem of misunderstanding between China and the West, in terms of their political systems, social order and ideologies. Moreover, the experience of being mistreated during COVID-19 lights up the students' desire for global social justice, which is to be respected as equal humans in UK society. Such findings may facilitate further discussions in the landscape of international higher education and global learning.

Finally, as I mentioned before, existing studies on Chinese international students focus heavily on their decision making, learning styles, language barriers, intercultural competency and employability. There lacks a meaningful exploration of students' critical understanding of the current global system and their place in the globalised world across the social, cultural, political, economic and ideological domain. By constructing the notion of GC through multiple lenses of neoliberalism, cosmopolitanism and critical activism, my research not only superficially presents the neoliberal reality of Chinese students' international mobility, but also profoundly surfaces their humanistic and globally responsible nature of them. My findings provide a rich narrative of the participants' experiences and reflections on social justice, either

through direct participation (joining protests and volunteering work) or indirect involvement (witnessing social movements and strong feelings of anti-racism) As such, this study may also contribute to the broader field of internationalisation and global learning.

### **7.2.2 Limitations of this research**

After demonstrating the significance of my research and its original contribution to the knowledge body, I also acknowledge the limitations due to various factors. There are four major issues which may affect the overall outcome of my research: the limitations of sample size, research method, potential participant bias and the unexpected event of COVID-19. This section discusses the four concerns separately.

Firstly, the sample size in relation to the population and sites of the research is not wide enough to reflect the various experiences of all Chinese students in the UK. My study is limited to three universities with a sample size of 19 postgraduate students of 16 different majors. Therefore, the findings may be context-specific and limited in breadth for reaching a generalisation. Given the fact that universities' reputation, location, resources, teaching teams, organisational structure and cultural diversity could impact students' GC (Galipeau-Konate, 2014) and my study only investigates three universities, more sites and a larger sample of Chinese students should be explored in the future to testify to the strength of my findings. Moreover, due to the snowball sample strategy, a bigger proportion (10 out of 19) of the participants majored in education-related subjects such as TESOL, Early Education, and International Education. Those students tend to be sensitive to cultural differences and are interested in various topics on global issues. Therefore, I am aware that the sample selection of my research might impact the findings.

Secondly, my data source is limited to qualitative interviews and questionnaires. Future studies could use additional data sources, such as observation and quantitative surveys, to broaden the sample pool and add research validity. Moreover, my research method relied on students' self-reporting, which potentially exposes data to bias since interviewees may feel pressured to report positive gains from their experiences and



their memories of past events might not accurately reflect on what really happened to them. Therefore, without any objective measurement and evaluation, it was difficult to determine whether there was an actual improvement in students' different sets of skills, compared to their previous abilities and those of other students who did not study abroad. Although the self-reported nature of students' change of values and improvement of skills is a limitation, the students' narratives were overwhelmingly authentic. Within its limitations, this research still provides the insiders' own perspectives on the experience of transformative learning and change.

Thirdly, there is a possibility for participant bias, because the interviewees who were willing to take part in this study may be more sensitive and receptive to social engagement and gaining GC than other students who didn't want to be involved in the research. In addition, Chinese students who are already interested in Western culture, global affairs and social justice may be more likely to study abroad to improve their global outlook (Wu, 2015). It is likely that the 19 interview participants had some personal interest in the subject of GC or curiosity in the interview process, so they committed to taking part in the project. Moreover, bias could be associated with a slightly bigger proportion (11 out of 19) of the interviewees who majored in social sciences such as education, translation, social research and international development, which offered them more disciplinary knowledge in relation to GC compared with the cohorts who majored in the natural sciences. Furthermore, the participants were from only three universities in the UK and are not representative of all Chinese students in the UK, considering the location and ranking of a university play a role in students' GC experience. Nevertheless, this research attempt to expand the understanding of GC development for Chinese international students in detail of their self-reported transformative journey, but it is not able to cover a massive amount of such cohorts.

Finally, my research took place in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is an unexpected event affecting students' learning and daily activities. Since the end of March 2020 after the second round of interviews, all UK universities closed their campuses and switched to online teaching mode. This shift largely changed the feature and agenda of students' study abroad programmes. On one hand, the students

had only two terms (six months) on campus learning and social activities instead of three terms (nine months). This significantly reduced students' opportunity for direct intercultural contact with their international peers and teachers, thereby hindering GC development. On the other hand, the enormous attention students paid on reading about and reflecting on this global issue, together with their lived experiences of racism and mistreatment, stimulated their understanding of globalisation and desire for social justice, which are important components of GC. It is unlikely that future international students would face such uncertainty and paradox in their education abroad programmes. Although the current pandemic is causing global crisis and enormous change in the British education system, the trends and landscape of Chinese students' study in the UK are unlikely to alter in the long term (Mok et al, 2021). Notwithstanding my study during this unusual time that resulted in students' distinctive experiences, it provides valuable insights into alternative approaches for GC development.

### **7.3. Recommendations**

The dramatic increase in numbers of Chinese students in the UK has sparked heated discussions about the consequences for the students and their families, universities in the UK, the broader global community and internationalisation of higher education. My study provides implications and recommendations for policymakers, educators, students and other researchers in the international context and at different levels. On the macro level, the findings from my study could inform educators and policy makers in both China and the UK to offer better global citizenship education and support for international students. My research has implications for higher education systems not only in the UK but also in other study abroad destination countries to improve their reputation and service for international students. On the micro level, my research aims to provide advice and guidance for Chinese students to not only take advantage of international mobility but also to become a new generation of global citizens with Chinese characteristics who make positive changes at the global level.

### 7.3.1 Implications for International Higher Education

As the world has evolved more internationally as a result of advancements in technology and communication, better convenient travel, and the rise of a globally mobile population, higher education systems have grown more cosmopolitan and transnationally integrated as well (Johnson et al, 2021). This research is set in the context of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education, with the danger that GC is overlooked in the short-term pursuit of prestige and economic gain. We are currently in the face of a profound crisis that will have far-reaching consequences in society and higher education in aspects that are not yet apparent (Esaki-Smith, 2020; Mok et al, 2021). Meanwhile, there has been a steady increase in the number of Chinese students studying abroad or enrolling in transnational education programmes. Due to the dramatic growth of China's middle-class and their common recognition of the significance of international education qualification, more Chinese families will support their children to study abroad with private funding and believe their children will acquire different sets of global skills from the international study experience in the near future (Wang, 2020). The enormous challenge ahead is not just the uneven distribution of financial resources and human capital, but also a lack of understanding of how Chinese international students can be supported in the global education system. I argue that "a more inclusive approach to internationalization" (de Wit, 2019) is not about merely increasing the number of Chinese students, but cultivating GC among all the home students, international students and professional staff in the universities' community.

Despite the importance of its central role in supporting the knowledge economy, higher education's position as a public good remains fundamental and it must promote social mobility and equality across the world (Altbach, & Knight, 2007; Marginson, 2014; de Wit, 2019). It is worth noting that the majority of Chinese international students are self-funded and can be identified as "socio-economic elites" (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015, p.948). This raises concern about the issue of inequality in the global flow of knowledge, social-cultural and economic capital under the influence of neoliberal internationalisation. To some extent, my research reflects the problematic story of how internationalisation of higher education enhances privileged Chinese students to reproduce social class, gain advantages in labour markets and thus deepen the

inequality gap within and outside China. There is a danger that when international mobility and GC become a symbol of a social elite which only associate with a small section of the global society (Bourn, 2021a), the purpose of internationalisation will become purely driven by a neoliberal agenda and a higher degree of separation will emerge between different groups. As such, I hope that the future of international mobility should not be limited to students with sufficient private funding, but everyone who is willing to gain GC through overseas study. To achieve this goal, there needs to be more public funding and scholarship schemes from both China and host countries for disadvantaged international students.

COVID-19 has raised deep concern about the higher education system's capacity to support international students' learning and wellbeing in crises, uncertainty and complexity. At the same time, many countries' higher education systems are facing difficulties with major implications in the short and possibly medium term, but the effect will vary globally, with some countries being more affected than others (Altbach, 2019). It is considerable that during this ongoing crisis universities worldwide could re-evaluate their purpose in the global society and examine how cultivating GC is relevant to resolve the problems we are facing today. As Bourn (2021) addressed, it is crucial to engage students beyond emotional responses and recognition of global forces in such a special time. Higher education institutions need to pay proper attention "both through the formal curriculum but also more widely through their culture, lifestyle, and aims encourage learning that equips graduates for not only working but living in and engaging in a global society" (Bourn, 2021a, p83). Thus, understanding higher education's broader position in this crisis is the key task toward coping constructively with the problems that will eventually appear in a globalised environment.

My research demonstrates a clear link between the level of students' satisfaction with their study abroad experiences and the extent to which they participate in the host society. This suggests the main function of internationalisation should be related to helping international students to connect with the wider global societies in the host country beyond the universities' campuses. Higher education worldwide should not only promote and embrace the Western value of neoliberalism and liberal democracy but respect the traditions, customs and norms of diverse cultures. International mobility should facilitate cultural exchange and mutual understanding between countries and

cultures thereby reducing conflicts and prejudice. In this sense, Chinese international students should be treated as cultural ambassadors who add diversity and different perspectives to western society. As Bourn (2018) addresses, transformative learning towards cultivating GC in international higher education takes place only when learners are placed in a just and inclusive environment without prejudice and discrimination. The fairness and respect the international higher education paying to Chinese students are signals of justice and equality.

### **7.3.2 Recommendations to Universities in the UK**

The dynamic growth of Chinese international students in the UK has sparked heated discussions about the implications for universities and the rest of society. Over the past two decades, the UK has made significant strides in attracting Chinese international students. The students report very high rates of satisfaction with their courses and are among the least likely to drop out. International private schools and study abroad agents in China, which act as a pipeline to universities in the UK, are seeing continued demand and are becoming increasingly common across China (Johnson et al., 2021). However, my study reveals a number of factors that might affect Chinese students' enrolment and the quality of their experience in UK. To attract the next generation of Chinese students and cultivate GC for both home and international students, there are a few suggestions that arise from my interpretation of the findings.

My findings suggest the importance of hosting universities in the UK as a miniature of global community and international society. This particular environment provides Chinese students with valuable conditions and opportunities to bond with international others and maintain a sense of belonging to the wider context of the UK. The cultural diversity of universities in the UK offers an immersive global experience for both international and home students. Therefore, universities should promote interconnectivity and a sense of community to facilitate all students' intercultural awareness and critical reflection on different perspectives. Through combining academic experience and social engagement, students in the UK are not only gaining subject knowledge and qualifications, but also changing attitudes and acquiring skills to live in the globalised world. "GC should be seen as part of pedagogy for equipping

students with the knowledge, skills and values to be active participants in the globalised economy and society” (Bourn, 2021a, p.84). Therefore, universities’ role needs to be related to providing social connection opportunities and creating pedagogical practice that influence global citizen identity development, build cultural competence, enhance notions of inclusiveness and emphasise community engagement.

Examining my findings shows that many participants enjoyed activities to promote Chinese culture to both home students and other international students. Those activities, including teaching Chinese language and calligraphy, hosting traditional Chinese festivals, cooking Chinese food to share, and so on, could benefit both home and international students to develop their global outlook, cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills, thereby cultivating GC. Meanwhile, Chinese students also feel inspired when they are invited to parties of other cultures, including Christmas dinners, Halloween parties and the Indian Diwali festival. As such, universities should encourage, create more opportunities for and facilitate culture exchange among all students, which can be student-led casual events. In addition, as Killick (2013) suggested, universities in the UK should facilitate both more course-based and out-of-class activities that promote positive interactions between international students instead of putting them at a disadvantaged position based on a deficit approach. Indeed, Chinese students should be given more space to express their agency and voice without the obstacle of power imbalances that exist in the international higher education system.

It is also important to enhance international students’ pedagogical adjustment and relevance of the curriculum. Although most Chinese students are satisfied with the teaching quality in the UK, many of them are concerned about the difficulty in connecting with academic staff when they could not keep up with the curriculum and understand coursework. The universities in the UK should create a platform in which international students can contact academic staff and student services at ease after classes. Moreover, all the participants claimed they had some degree of difficulty in academic writing and critical thinking due to the different learning style in China. It would be very helpful to offer Chinese students some courses or training programmes to bridge the gap between students’ previous way of learning and the teaching style

of the British education system. Furthermore, Chinese students' primary motivation for studying abroad is to improve their career prospects in China, but some students complained that their course content was irrelevant to their professional needs. Universities should consider how to better design curriculums to make the knowledge more applicable to international students' career development in their home countries.

Last but not the last, GC is not just important for international students, but also for university staff and home students at all levels in the UK's education system. As Lilley (2013) addressed, the process of developing GC should occur simultaneously and reciprocally between different learners and teachers. Only when educators and officials in the British universities have global outlooks, international experience, cultural awareness and intercultural communication ability can they create a more welcome and supportive environment for Chinese students. Only when home students value the cultural diversity brought by international students and are willing to learn different worldviews with an open attitude can they also become global citizens with a deepened understanding of globalisation, appreciation of the variety of society and sense of inclusiveness. At the time of crisis such as COVID-19, universities in the UK should be more responsive to international students' safety, mental and learning needs. The host universities need to realise their crucial role in protecting Chinese students against negative influences of disinformation, racism, discrimination and mistreatment. As for most Chinese students, universities are their only "home" that provide them with emotional assurance and social connections in the UK. My research reveals that international students demand psychological support from universities as much as the quality of education.

### **7.3.3 Advice to Chinese International Students**

The majority of Chinese students face some degree of challenge related to pedagogical adjustment, language barriers, limited intercultural awareness and a lack of social engagement. My research reveals some effective solutions for international students to overcome these difficulties, thereby achieving better outcomes of transformative learning and GC development. My advice to students is based on

Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2000) that through being out of their comfort zone, active learning, encountering otherness, critical self-reflection, exploring new perspectives and acquiring global skills, they are able to deepen their understanding of and better adapt to the complex world.

It is worth noting that most students felt their previous English and critical thinking skills were not adequate enough for them to make the most of the British education system. My findings show that many students couldn't actively participate in class discussions and social interactions due to a lack of confidence in their language ability and thinking systems. Students need new strategies to address actual difficulties that hinder their success in international education. Regarding enhancing pedagogical adjustment and overcoming language barriers, participating in short-term study abroad programmes during undergraduate years, attending pre-session courses weeks before postgraduate courses, and keeping in touch regularly with personal tutors are the three most effective strategies reported in my research. There is also a crucial need to improve English language proficiency before studying abroad. Moreover, it is important for Chinese students to see university staff members as their helpers who are always willing to enhance their learning experience instead of authorities who are indifferent to their academic needs. In this way, students can feel more at ease and confident to ask for clear guidance when they encounter learning difficulties.

The students should actively take part in activities provided by their universities, local communities and social media. My findings suggest that social engagement and community participation both within the universities and in the wider host society, through joining student societies, taking part in volunteer work, engaging in part-time jobs, local churches and online social groups can significantly enhance the development of international students' global skills and stimulate their reflections on the study abroad experience. Social participation could take place in various forms including daily intercultural communication, witnessing social movements, volunteer work and joining events through using global social media. Through participation and reflection, students have agency to drive their transformative learning process, which is achieved when changes occur to learners' perspectives as a result of events and experiences which they engage with. My research reveals a strong correlation between students' social participation and GC development. Furthermore, Chinese



students should realise their rights and freedom to have their voice heard in the host society.

Finally, in the current increasingly interconnected but complex and uncertain era, China is positioned to become more internationally active over time. The young generation of Chinese is facing the global issues of the pandemic, economic crisis, global warming and environmental destruction. It is more important now than ever for all Chinese students to be aware of the possibilities of developing GC no matter in China or through international experience. Raising the conciseness of GC could provide students with a voice and the ability to construct for themselves the meaning of the world (Freire, 1970). The purpose of education for Chinese university students should not be limited to career development but preparation for a meaningful life that contributes to whole humanity beyond their own ethnicity, nationality and culture. Without the new Chinese generation's engagement and perspectives, many global problems cannot be solved. GC in terms of values and skills enables students to be open and flexible in responding to the inevitability of changing circumstances, thereby taking responsibility for a better future of mankind.

#### **7.4. Further Research**

This research has implications for both professional practice and further academic inquiry. Further research is needed to investigate a larger number of Chinese students and utilise more various research designs in order to generate a more holistic picture of Chinese sojourners' process of becoming global citizens. Based on the limitations of this study and some issues that emerged in the findings, my research poses four questions for further research: 1) To what extent are the findings and the Transformative Learning for GC Framework generated from this research relevant and applicable to Chinese and other international students in the wider context of international mobility outside the UK? 2) How can Chinese students' GC be translated into their lifelong personal and professional development which also add value to China's knowledge economy and globalised society? 3) How can international mobility go beyond enhancing neoliberal values to promote students' awareness and participation in global social justice? 4) In which ways do the increasing number of

Chinese international students influence the perception and cultivation of GC among home students, university staff and people in the host countries? The following section demonstrates each point respectively.

Firstly, in order to produce a broader overview and comprehensive picture of Chinese international students' GC development, additional research is needed to examine a greater number of participants from various disciplines and at different locations beyond the current circumstance. This research is in the context of the UK as the host country and there are a few other popular destinations for Chinese students including the USA, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and Japan. It would be compelling to compare students' GC development across multiple countries to understand how different host societies and education systems impact upon them. Thus, comparative research based on the present conceptual framework and methodology can be undertaken in other studies abroad destination countries across different disciplines of Chinese or other international students. Moreover, as participants in my research are only limited to postgraduate students, it is vital to explore how undergraduate students' develop GC, in terms of their sense of self in the world, perception of GC, understanding of globalisation and improvement of global skills during their journey of overseas study. In addition, to test the strength of the findings in my research, diverse research methods, such as large-scale surveys and focus group studies, could be conducted based on the conceptual model of GC constructed in my research.

Secondly, due to the constraint of time for this research project, I could not conduct follow-up research to explore the long-term impact of study abroad after the students went back China. Other scholars might be interested in investigating how international experience and the sense of being global citizens affect Chinese sojourners' life years after they return China. Although there are a few research studies (e.g. Gu, 2015; Mok, et al, 2017) that have examined the long-term impact of study abroad on Chinese students, those studies only touched on the employability and personal growth domain. Further research could investigate how international experience and gaining GC could influence overseas returnees' career choice, job skills, professional development, cosmopolitan values, intercultural competency, critical thinking, social engagement and sense of self in the world after years of completing their international education. While my research confirms the change of the participants' values, attitudes and skills

during study abroad, it is important to find out whether such transformative outcome could last and continuously shape their personal life and career advancement. Furthermore, how can the cultivated value of GC and global skills contribute to China's knowledge economy and harmonious global society.

Thirdly, it is also important for further research to explore the possibility of GC development for students who are unable to study abroad due to financial constraints or other personal reasons. My study presents the narratives from a small group of privileged Chinese students with sufficient social-economical capital for international mobility. However, the pursuit of diverse inclusion, education for all and social justice is inherent in the core values of GC. More studies should go beyond a narrow focus on students with advantageous social backgrounds and financial resources, thereby making efforts to reduce social inequities. My research reveals the paradox that, on one hand, the Chinese sojourners want to gain international certificates to be identified as a "global elite" in the job market. On the other hand, those students have a strong sense of global justice and are willing to contribute to building a world of equality and inclusiveness. Additional research should go beyond evaluating the neoliberal value of internationalisation to promote an awareness of the complexity and unfairness existing in the current global system. As such, to answer the question posed by Bourn (2021, p.86) the aim of cultivating GC can be connected to "broader social, economic and cultural needs regarding ensuring a more just and sustainable world".

Finally, apart from calling for further research on a greater sample of Chinese students in a wider context, I also recommend more attention to be paid to exploring how Chinese international students influence the GC development of the host community. My research reveals an issue that many Chinese international students believe their level of GC, especially global outlook, cultural awareness, attitude of inclusiveness and inter-cultural communication skill, far surpass their Western peers who do not have any international experience. More research should be conducted to develop a larger database of information to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the differences between Chinese students and Western students' sense of self as global citizens with relevant global skills. It would be interesting for further study to compare the GC values, attitudes and skills between international students and home students. In addition, it is worthy to explore the possibility that the host society and university

could make more effort to engage with international students as an approach to help local people and home students develop their GC. In addition, many participants claimed they made contributions to promote Chinese culture within universities and in the host society. Further research needs to evaluate how such efforts impact the GC development of non-Chinese students and local British people.

## **7.5. Final Comment**

In my research, GC development is a form of transformative learning in which Chinese students interact with the globalised world while reflecting on their own belief system, thoughts, feelings and actions. Becoming and being global citizens refers to the process in which students change perceptions as to their place in the world and acquire sets of skills to act in the world. Within this learning journey, their perception of themselves, others and the world are constantly changing and expanding. At the centre of GC development is empowering students to be active global citizens through posing a learner-centred pedagogical approach encouraging the challenging of assumptions on social-cultural norms and dominant global forces through participation in social engagement and global movements (Bourn, 2021b). It is important for the benefits of international mobility and GC development to be long-lasting and extend to not only China's employment market but wider global society more generally. With an adequate understanding of GC, global skills and willingness to take action, Chinese international students can be seen as agents of change for raising awareness of GC in their inner circles, hosting universities and countries, Chinese society and the wider global context. Moreover, GC should not be seen as a luxury good only for students who can afford international education. As Teng (2016) points out, with the rise of China's influence on the international stage, cultivating students' GC is a necessary trend and a future direction that China must take.

The social context of globalisation and China's development is a meaningful research field in international education. With a globalised society and increasing quest for cultivating global citizenship, China's university graduates are entering a new phase with the recognition of the importance of global education (Zhao, 2013; Yuan et al. 2019). This new era predicts a bright future and demands for Chinese students to

become global citizens. It is also noticeable that developing GC has been viewed as a type of elite education in China, as Chinese students think studying and travelling abroad is the only way to gain global awareness and vision (Fong, 2011). The role of GC development through studying abroad should not be limited to enhancing international students' productivity and competitiveness in the global environment (Bourn, 2018). Instead of merely expressing the neoliberal values of consumption, competition, alienation and individualism, Chinese students who study abroad have the meaningful potential to seek for their new mission as promoting a lifelong learning network to construct knowledge aiming for global solidarity, respect and a healthier worldwide community in which the new generation can share the value of global citizenship.

Through exploring Chinese students' transformative journey, I see GC as a form of inclusiveness and critical reflection which transcends prejudice, neoliberalism and ethnocentrism. It is not just passive tolerance of otherness or unjustified acceptance of existing systems, but proactive embracement of the differences in ourselves and others, as well as taking responsibility for social change. Chinese international students are bringing diversity to host countries and a global outlook to their home country, and thus have the potential power to call for a change in the collective consciousness of global society to treat them with respect and a sense of inclusiveness. As my findings advocate, it is not just Chinese students that need GC, but also people around them in host universities and wider society. Therefore, I argue that international students are not only sources of financial income in the global higher education system, but also social-culture resources for people in both host and home countries to gain global awareness and practise social justice. I envision a sustainable future that international sojourners become one of the major drives for higher education systems and global society to develop towards a harmonious, just and inclusive world.

Finally, the findings and recommendations from this research could inform educators in both China and the UK to offer better global education practices and support for international students. It could also help the UK's universities design more effective programmes to attract more international students, especially from China or elsewhere in the world to meet students' personal development goals and to contribute to a global

society of harmony. In particular, this research can offer university staff who deal with Chinese international students, such as recruiters, administrators, student service officials and tutors, practice guidance on how to provide better support to maximise the possibility of positive transformation learning and the cultivation of global citizens. In addition, this study may also contribute to the broader field of research in internationalisation in a way that positions international mobility as a vehicle for connecting education systems and different cultures between the West and the East.

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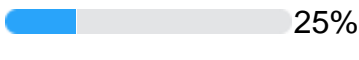
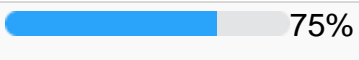
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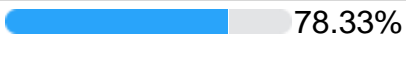
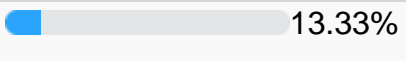
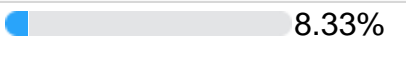
## Appendixes

### A. Questionnaire and Results at the beginning of study abroad

#### Q1. Gender 性别

Male 男	30	 25%
Female 女	90	 75%

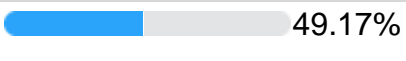
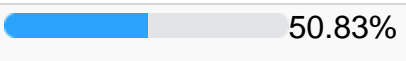
#### Q2. Age Range 年龄段

21-25	94	 78.33%
25-30	16	 13.33%
30+	10	 8.33%


Q3. What course and at which university are you studying in the UK? 您在英国读的  
课程和学校名称? 请用英文填写 (eg. MA Education at UCL, MSc Mechanical  
Engineering at Reading)

Q4. Which city/town in China are you from? 您来自中国哪个城市/镇?

Q5. Have you studied abroad more than one year before you came to the UK? 您是  
否在国外学习或生活过 12 个月或更长的时间? 比如参加交换生项目或学位课程。

Yes 是	59	 49.17%
No 否	61	 50.83%

Q6. Why did you decide to study abroad? Please choose the top 3 reasons. 您选择  
出国留学的原因是什么? 请选择你最赞成的 3 个选项或填写其他原因

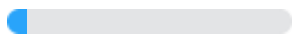
improve English skills 提高英语水平	55	 45.83%
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for better quality education 海外教育质量（师资和教学模式）更好	71	59.17%
gain a valuable certificate for a better career 学位镀金，让未来有更好的事业发展机会	82	68.33%
explore the world by international travelling 有机会去各国旅游体验	25	20.83%
understand different cultures 了解不同文化	39	32.5%
cultivate a global outlook 培养国际视野	62	51.67%
meet your parents or friends' expectation 迎合你的父母或朋友的期望	14	11.67%
hope to work or immigrate abroad after studying 希望毕业后能够留在国外工作或移民	7	5.83%
Other 其它原因	5	4.17%

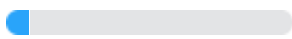
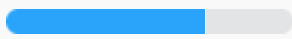
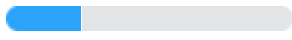
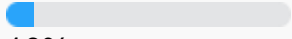

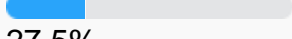
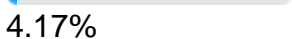
Q7. Why did you choose the UK as the destination to study abroad? 您为什么选择英国作为你的留学地点？

have friends or family in the UK 在英国拥有朋友或家人	8	6.67%
interested in British culture 对英国文化感兴趣	38	31.67%
save time to complete a master degree in one year 节省硕士学习时间，英国硕士只要一年	82	68.33%
trust the education system in the UK 认可英国教育系统	51	42.5%
the subject you want to study only available in the UK 只有英国才有你想要学习的课程科目	14	11.67%
like the society and environment in the UK 喜欢英国的社会与环境	50	41.67%

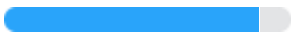
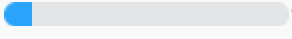


other 其它	9	 7.5%
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Q8. Which two definitions of 'global citizen' do you mostly agree with? 请选择两项你最赞同的‘全球/国际公民’的定义

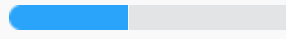

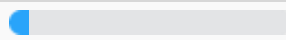
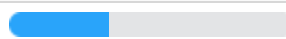
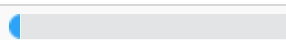
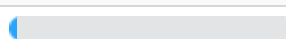
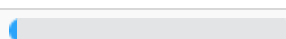
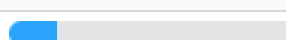
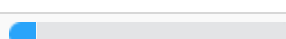
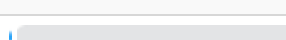
someone who travels to many countries 世界各地旅游的人	10	 8.33%
someone who understand different cultures 了解各国文化的人	84	 70%
someone who can speak different languages 会说不同语言的人	32	 26.67%
someone who works in a global company 在跨国公司工作的人	12	 10%
someone who cares about global issues 关心世界事实的人	64	 53.33%
someone who takes care of the environment of planet earth 保护地球生态环境的人	33	 27.5%
other 其它	5	 4.17%

Q9. Is gaining a global outlook one of your motivations for studying abroad? 提升国际视野是不是您出国留学的动力之一?

Yes 是	108	 90%
No 否	12	 10%

Q10. What are the top two skills you wish to develop when you are studying in the UK? 您在英国留学最想学习和提高的技能是什么? 请选择 2 个你最同意的选项。

global outlook 国际视野	41	 34.17%
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intercultural communication 跨文化交流技能	50		41.67%
critical thinking 批判性思维	51		42.5%
creativity 创新技能	9		7.5%
academic skills 学术技能	43		35.83%
culture awareness 文化意识	5		4.17%
teamwork 团队合作技能	4		3.33%
use of new technology 新科技的应用技能	4		3.33%
independence 独立生活能力	21		17.5%
adaptability 适应新环境的能力	11		9.17%
other 其它	1		0.83%

Q11. Would you like to take part in the interview stage of the research project? If so please write down your contact details. 感谢完成此次问卷！您是否愿意参与随后的访谈？如果感兴趣，请留下微信、邮箱或电话号码任一联系方式。届时，我会和您联系。

## **B. Information Sheet**

### **Becoming a Global Citizen Through Study Abroad**

From 09/2019 to 07/2020

#### **Information sheet for Chinese postgraduate students studying in the UK invited to participate in this research**

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask me at any time if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like some more information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

The research aims to find out how Chinese students' study abroad experience impact their perception of global citizenship and the development of global skills. I very much hope that you would like to take part. This information sheet will try to answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

#### **Who is carrying out the research?**

My name is Xi Tao. I'm a third-year PhD student studying at IOE, UCL. My research area is on international higher education and global citizenship.

#### **Why are we doing this research?**

Under the impact of globalisation and China's development, there are increasing number of Chinese students who study abroad. The UK has been one of the most popular destination for Chinese university graduates to pursue a postgraduate degree. Through this research, I want to gain insight into how study abroad experience impact students' perception of their identities as global citizens and what type of skills needed to become global citizens for Chinese students. The research aims to find out the relationship between Chinese postgraduate students' global citizenship and their one-year study experience in the UK.

My study identifies the term Global Citizenship (GC) as students' perception of their identity and the skills they acquired to live and strive in the globalized world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Global Citizenship includes students' awareness, perspective, values, attitudes and actions. Cultivating global citizens is cited as one of the top goals in the universities in the UK. More and more Chinese international students show strong interest and passion of becoming global citizen. It is important to understand how the attributes of GC could be formed and developed during students' international study experience.

This study attempts to deepen the understanding of the qualitatively different ways of perceiving GC and developing global skills amongst Chinese postgraduate students in UK's universities. The findings and recommendations from this research could inform educators in both China and UK to offer better global education practise and support for international students. It could also help the UK's universities design more effective programmes to attract more international students especially from China or elsewhere in the world to meet students' personal development goals and contribute to a global society of harmony.

### **Why am I being invited to take part?**

The research project is designed as a one-year longitudinal study of Chinese international students who begin their postgraduate course in September 2019. The longitudinal study applies a qualitative method composing of an initial questionnaire and three sets of semi-structured interviews at the beginning, middle and the end of the one-year programme. You are invited to take part in the interviews, because your response to the initial questionnaire demonstrates a strong willingness to share your personal experience and opinion on your study journey in the UK.

### **What will happen if I choose to take part?**

Three sets of interviews will be undertaken face to face at the beginning, middle and final stage of your master programme. Interviews will be conducted in the Chinese language. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed. You will be asked to check the transcriptions before all data are documented.

Each interview lasts around 30 minutes and covered topics including:

- Your motivations to study abroad (what you hoped to gain and what influenced your decision on study abroad.
- Your understandings of the concept 'global citizenship' and whether you see yourself as a 'global citizen'.
- How you see the connections between issues happening in China and elsewhere in the world?
- Your recognition of what it means to live and work in a global society and of the value of having a broad global outlook that respects, listens to and values perspectives from different culture.
- Do you think the one-year study abroad experience contributes to making you into a global citizen?
- What is the most impressive experience you have had regarding becoming a global citizen?

### **Will anyone know I have been involved?**

As the researcher, I will be the only person who is aware of your involvement in the research. All the information collected from you will be kept confidential. Only the researcher can access the data recordings. Your contributions to the research will be anonymised by use of false name. You will not be identified in the research paper.

### **Could there be problems for me if I take part?**

There should be no harm and disadvantages for you in taking part of the research. The interview style is designed to be supportive. There is no sensitive topic involved in the interviews. Your participation in the research will have no bearing on assessments made or support offered within your university.

### **What will happen to the results of the research?**

The information collected from the research will be stored in my personal computer with password security. No one outside the project has access to the research data. Recording made during the research will be used only for analysis of the students' experience in my PhD research project. No one will be allowed access to the original recordings. The results of my PhD study may be published internally to help educators and researchers understand the international students' experience. You will not be identified or identifiable in my PhD thesis.

### **Do I have to take part?**

It is entirely up to you whether or not you choose to take part. Taking part of the research will provide you a valuable opportunity to reflect upon and talk about your experience and concerns. Your insight and opinion will help develop further provisions for the next generation of students.

Your involvement in the research will not have any effect on your grades and your future employment. If you decided to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a Consent Form (you will be given a copy for your records). You are free to withdraw at any time of the research without giving a reason.

### **Data Protection Privacy Notice**

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at [data-protection@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@ucl.ac.uk). Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found here: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacynotice>

### **Contact for further information**

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at [xi.tao.15@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:xi.tao.15@ucl.ac.uk)

If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to me in person before the first interview session.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for taking part in the research!

## C. Consent Form

### Institute of Education



### Becoming a Global Citizen Through Study Abroad: A Longitudinal Study of Chinese Postgraduate Students' Experience in the UK

#### Consent Form

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form and return to Xi Tao in person.

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information sheet about the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in three sets of interviews from 11/2019 to 07/2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to be audio recorded during the interview sessions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will not be attributed to me. My contributions will be anonymized by use of a false name.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time by contacting the researcher by email, telephone or in person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the anonymized data and record I provide to be archived and treated in strictest confidence. Only the researcher will have the access to my data recordings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher: XI TAO  
UCL Institute of Education  
20 Bedford Way London WC1H 0AL  
xi.tao.15@ucl.ac.uk

## D. Three sets of Interview Questions

### First Interview

19 students studying different subjects from the 3 universities were selected to join in the first interview. 9 students from UCL, 5 from Reading and 5 from University of Bath. All these 19 participants attended the rest two interviews in the middle of their study (March, 2020) and by the end of their study (July, 2020). The first Interview were conducted face to face in pre-booked study-rooms or café at each university.

Interview questions were explained in detail in the Chinese language. All the students answered the questions in Chinese language, so that they felt comfortable to explain their thoughts and experience. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. I translated the Chinese transcribe into English. Each interview lasts around 45 minutes with 7 open-ended questions.

#### **Section 1. Motivation of study abroad**

Q1. What are your motivations to study abroad?

你出国的动力和目的是什么？

- Probing: Why did you choose to study in the UK?

Q2. Why did you choose to study in your university and course?

你为什么选择当前的学校和专业？

- Probing: What is your plan after completing your postgraduate course?

#### **Section 2. Perception of global citizenship and global skills**

Q3. What is your understanding of the concept of 'global citizenship/outlook' and being 'global citizen'?

你对'全球公民'或者'国际视野'这类概念有什么看法和理解？

- Probing 1: Have you heard of the terms such as global citizen, global outlook and global competency? Where did you hear these terms?
- Probing 2: What do you think about the definition of these terms?

Q4. Do you think and expect studying abroad experience can make you a global citizen?

你是否认为或期望留学经历可以让你成为一名全球公民或具有国际视野？

- *Probing 1: Do you want to be a global citizen and why?*
- Probing 2: Is having global outlook one of your motivations for studying abroad?



Q5. What type of attitude and skills do you think a global citizen should have and do you already have some of them? 你认为全球公民需要有什么心态和哪些技能? 你目前有什么成为全球公民所需要的技能?

- Probing: present to students a list of global skills as example.

### **Section 3. Reflection on studying and living experience**

Q6. What do you feel about you study abroad experience so far?

你目前对你的留学生活感受如何?

- Probing 1: *What impressed you the most you came to the UK?* 你到英国后印象最深刻的是什么?
- Probing 2: What do you like and enjoy the most when studying and living in the UK?

在英国的学习和生活中, 你最喜欢做什么?

- Probing 3: What challenges do you have living in the new environment? 在新的学习和生活环境中, 你感受到了什么挑战和困难?
- Probing 4: What skills do you think you need to improve from now on? 你认为今后你需要在哪些方面提升自己的能力?

Q7. To what extent do you think you have developed global citizenship/outlook since you came to the UK?

你来到英国以后在哪些方面和程度上提升了国际视野和能力? 请举例说明。

- Probing: Give examples relating to how you have developed global outlook. Such as: making new friends, learning different culture and language, paying attention to more international issues, increasing use of international social network, changing perception of who you are.....

### **Second Interview**

The second set of interviews aimed to map out changes happening in each participant's daily life, study experience, thoughts, feelings and behaviours in relation to GC. In order to answer the main research question of how does study abroad impact GC, the second interviews investigated what type of events, activities, relationships, information, learning and awareness have contributed to the change of participants' perception of GC and global skills during the past six months.

The framework of my research is based on Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1998). My research views transformative learning as a process through which Chinese students approach various challenges during their study abroad experience and

complexities of their new role as global citizens. One of the central characteristics of transformational learning is critical reflection, during which the students interpret their study abroad experience by deep examining of their underlying belief systems and competency/skills relate to global citizenship. Therefore, the interview questions emphasis on exploring students' facing challenges and complexities of their new roles during study abroad. Through asking probing questions such as 'why did you feel in this way'; 'why not choose a different solution', the interview process aim to stimulate students' own 'critical reflection' process in accordance with the framework of transformative learning.

More specifically, the aims of the second interview are to:

1. Explore what challenge and improvement students had since they came to the UK.
2. Identify the changes on students' global outlook and their views about being global citizens since the first interview.
3. Investigate the extent to which the study abroad enables students to develop new belief and skills.
4. Reflect under the current global issue of Coronavirus, how students react to the situation and see themselves in world.

### **Theme 1: Experience: academic/pedagogy, culture/lifestyle, social connection**

**Q1 (General Experience):** How do you feel about your study abroad experience during the past six months since you arrived in UK? 你觉得你来英国后这六个月的留学经历怎么样?

Probing:

- As you mentioned in the first interview, you did not fully get used to.....(living alone)

正如你在第一次面试中提到的, 你并没有完全适应, 现在怎样

- Do you feel comfortable living in UK now or still have some culture-shock? 你现在住在英国感觉舒服吗?还是仍然有文化冲击?

- What is your daily routine like? Any change since the last interview? 你的日常生活是怎样的?上次面试后有什么变化吗?

**Q2 (Academic/Pedagogy)** What do you think about your postgraduate programme so far?

到目前为止, 你认为你的研究生课程怎么样?

Probing:

- In the first interview, you said it was difficult to understand what teachers said in the class. How is it now?

在第一次面试中, 你说很难听懂老师在课堂上说的话。现在怎么样了?

- How do you feel about the course content and teaching style?

你觉得课程内容和教学风格怎么样?

- How is the coursework and assessment for you? Do you find it difficult?

你的课程作业和评估如何?你觉得难吗?

- Do you enjoy teamwork and discussion with other students? Why?

你喜欢团队合作和与其他同学讨论吗?为什么?

**Q3 (Social)** How do you feel about interacting with (a) locals, (b) Chinese students, and (c) international students from other countries?

你觉得与(a)当地人、(b)中国学生和(c)其他国家的国际学生交流怎么样?

Probing:

- What group of people do you mostly get in touch with in you daily life?

在你的日常生活中,你最常接触的是哪一类人?

- Do you live with students from different countries and how did you feel about it?

你和来自不同国家的学生住在一起吗?你觉得怎么样?

- Did you do any teamwork or make friends with people from different countries?

你参加过什么团队活动吗?你和来自不同国家的人做过朋友吗?

- Do you prefer being friends with Chinese students or foreign students? Why?

你喜欢和中国学生还是外国学生交朋友?为什么?

## Theme 2: Perception on Global Citizenship

**Q4 (Changing Perception)** In the first interview, you spoke about your view on global outlook/citizenship as..... How do you feel about the terms such as international/global outlook, globalisation and global citizen now? Any change?

你如何看待“国际/全球视野”、“全球化”和“全球公民”等概念?任何改变吗?

- What experience and activities did you have which are relevant to developing global outlook and skills in the last six month? Give example

在过去的六个月里,你有什么与发展全球视野和技能相关的经验和活动?给的例子

- What did you learn for those experience?

你从这些经历中学到了什么?

- Is there any experience has led you to change your attitudes or beliefs in any way?

有没有什么经历让你改变了态度或想法?

- What type of person do you think a global citizen is? Are you a global citizen? Why?

你认为全球公民是什么类型的人?你是全球公民吗?为什么?

### Theme 3: Challenge and Improvement on Global Skills

**Q5 (Challenges):** What are the main challenges you had in your daily life and study in the UK?

你在英国的日常生活和学习中遇到的主要挑战是什么？

Probing: In the first interview, you mentioned that

- What do you think was difficult for you?
- Give some examples of the challenges..... 列举一些挑战
- How did you overcome these challenges? 你是如何克服这些挑战的？

**Q6 (Improvement):** What have you learnt in the class and daily life since you arrived in the UK? 你来英国后，在课堂和日常生活中都学到了什么？

Probing:

- At the first interview, you mentioned you wanted to improve.....(English language skills/critical thinking skills...) Have you made any improvement of those skills? How did you make the improvement?
- What improvement did you have in your academic skills?

你的学习能力有什么提高？

- What knowledge and skills have you learnt from you daily life?

你从日常生活中学到了什么知识和技能？

**Q7 (Goal)**What are your goals and plans before finishing your postgraduate programme?

在完成研究生课程之前，你的目标和计划是什么？

- Academic goal? 学业目标
- Personal improvement plan? 个人改进计划吗？
- Career direction? 职业方向
- Any plan relates to developing global outlook and skills? 有任何关于发展全球视野和技能的计划吗？

**Theme 4: Q8 (Global Issue)** How do you feel about the current situation of Coronavirus?

你如何看待目前冠状病毒的情况？

- What impact it has on your daily life in UK 它对你在英国的日常生活有什么影响？

- How you view this issue? 你如何看待这个问题?
- How do other students around you respond to the current situation?  
你周围的其他学生如何应对当前的情况?
- Do you care about the situation outside China and UK?  
你关心中国和英国以外的情况吗?为什么?

### Third Interview

The framework of my research is based on Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1998). My research views transformative learning as a process through which Chinese students approach various challenges during their study abroad experience and complexities of their new role as global citizens. One of the central characteristics of transformational learning is critical reflection, during which the students interpret their study abroad experience by deep examining their underlying belief systems and competency/skills relate to global citizenship. Therefore, the interview questions emphasis students' own 'critical reflection' process in accordance with the framework of transformative learning.

More specifically, the aims of the final interview are to:

- Explore what challenge and improvement students had since they came to the UK.
- Identify the changes in students' global outlook and their views about being global citizens since the first and second interviews.
- Investigate the extent to which the past 10-month study abroad experience enables students to develop their new perspectives and skills.
- Reflect under the current global issue of Coronavirus, how students react to the situation and see themselves in the world.

The final interview was more flexible and less structured comparing with the two previous interviews. In that stage, the students were encouraged to tell their whole story of their study abroad journey and the relevance of their journey to becoming global citizens. The interview questions were related to:

- What your perceptive on globalisation and global citizenship now (compared with last September)?
- What global skills have you gained from the journey and how did those learning processes happen?
- Do you think the one-year study abroad experience contributes to making you a global citizen? In what aspects?
- What is the most impressive experience you have had regarding becoming a global citizen?

## **Theme 1: Experience: academic/pedagogy, culture/lifestyle, social connection**

**Q1 (General Experience):** How do you feel about your study abroad experience in general? 目前情况怎样?

- Is the study abroad experience meeting your previous expectation? Why? 留学经历达到你的期望了吗? 有什么区别?

**Q2 (Academic/Pedagogy)** What do you think about your postgraduate programme? 硕士课程怎样?

- In the previous interviews, you said it was difficult to understand what teachers said in the class. How is it now? 适应了吗?
- How do you feel about the course content, teaching style, and coursework? 对总体课程内容和教学方式感觉怎样?
- How do you feel about the online learning experience during the lockdown? 目前在线学习感觉怎样?

**Theme 2: Q3 (Global Issue)** How do you feel about the current situation of Coronavirus?

- What impact it has on your postgraduate study? 当前疫情对你学习生活有什么影响?
- How you view this issue? 你对全球疫情有什么看法?

## **Theme 3: Challenge and Improvement of Global Skills**

**Q4 (Challenges):** What are the main challenges you had in your daily life and study in the UK? 面临的困难和挑战有什么?

(Probing: In the previous interviews, you mentioned that 之前你说过。。现在怎样?)

- Give some examples of the challenges..... 举例说明。
- How did you overcome these challenges? 你是如何克服这些挑战和困难的?

**Q5 (Improvement):** What have you learned in the class and daily life since you arrived in the UK? 在生活和学习中有哪些收获?

- In the previous interviews, you mentioned you wanted to improve.....(English language skills/critical thinking skills...) Have you made any improvements in those skills? How did you improve?
- What improvement did you have in your academic skills? 学术技能

- What knowledge and skills have you learnt from your daily life? 生活技能?
- 哪些技能提升与全球视野和国际化相关?

#### **Theme 4: Perception on Global Citizenship**

**Q6 (Changing Perception)** In the previous interviews, you spoke about your view on global outlook/citizenship as..... How do you feel about the terms such as international/global outlook, globalisation and global citizen now? Any change? 你现在对全球化，国际视野和国际公民的看法各是什么？

- What experience and activities did you have which are relevant to developing a global outlook and skills since last September? Give examples 有什么实际经历提升了国际视野
- What did you learn for that experience? 你学到了什么?
- Is there any experience that has led you to change your attitudes or beliefs in any way?
- What type of person do you think a global citizen is? Are you a global citizen? Why?

你觉得全球公民是什么样的人？你是全球公民吗？为什么？

**Theme 4: Q7 (Goal and Plan)** With the global skills you have developed, what are your goals and plans after completing the postgraduate programme? 完成学业后的计划是什么？

- Personal improvement plan and Career direction? 个人目标，就业发展？
- Have your views on future plan changed? 你的个人发展规划在这一年以来有变化吗？
- Does any plan relate to continually developing global outlook and skills? 有什么未来规划和发展与国际视野有关？

## E. Participants Demographic Form

Pseudonym	University	Gender	Course	Age	City/Province
Student 1	UCL	M	MSc Social Research Method	21-24	Shengzhen
Student 2	UCL	F	MA Translation studies	21-24	Jingzhou
Student 3	UCL	F	MSc Population Health	21-24	Chongqing
Student 4	UCL	F	MA Education	25-30	Beijing
Student 5	UCL	F	MSc Genetics, evolution and environment	21-24	Changchun
Student 6	UCL	M	MSc Mechanically engineering	21-24	Shenzhen
Student 7	UCL	M	MA TESOL	21-24	Kunming
Student 8	UCL	F	MA Education and International Development	21-24	Jinhua
Student 9	UCL	F	MA Education (Early Years)	21-24	Shanghai
Student 10	UCL	F	MSc Developmental psychology	21-24	Guizhou
Student 11	Reading	M	MSc Accounting and Finance	21-24	Anhui
Student 12	Reading	F	MA TESOL	25-30	Shenzhen
Student 13	Reading	F	MSc Accounting and Finance	30+	Shanghai
Student 14	Reading	F	MSc Information Management	25-30	Shanghai
Student 15	Bath	M	MA TESOL	21-24	Tianjin
Student 16	Bath	F	MA International Education	21-24	Guiyang
Student 17	Bath	F	MA Education	25-30	Xinyu
Student 18	Bath	F	MA TESOL	21-24	Shanxi
Student 19	Bath	F	MA TESOL	25-30	Hebei



## F. Sample Interview Transcript with Translation

File: Part of Third Interview with Student 15

Date: 4pm-5pm, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

Location: WeChat video call (Due to Covid-19 regulation)

... ..

我：好的，谢谢分享你的学习收获。你有没有什么和提高国际视野或者是全球意识相关的收获？

**Me: Alright. Thank you for sharing your study experience. Have you learned anything related to improving your international outlook or global awareness?**

学生：我觉得主要就是平常会看一些不同的媒体。因为留学之前就是没有这个机会去看其他国家的媒体平台，只有一个从中国出发的世界观，现在开始从不同视角去看一件事情。比方说微信，一般都是我也关注一些国内的，比如说人民网或者说是这些官方的国家媒体，咱们国家媒体更多的是倾向于去呼吁大家爱国团结，比如说疫情期间。然后你可以很明显看到说咱们那儿宣传的东西和外媒不一样，比如说看台湾的一些媒体，然后再看看那些个美国的，比如说美国之音。这些个媒体的话，这三家其实非常不一样的。然后台湾的话他可能会说一些消极的更多一些，然后美国之音的话他可能更偏向于中立一些，然后客观一些。BBC也是非常客观的一个平台，他平常不会说有太多自己的见解，他就是客观描述一些事实。不同媒体的表述不一样，侧重点不一样。自然我就会从一个国际的角度去出发，就不是说从单单从一个国家去出发。我觉得这个可能也就是全球视野。我会感觉到从不管是中国，台湾还是美国英国都有自己的道理，没有对错。

Student: I think my main improvement took place through watching and reading news from different media. Before I studied abroad, I didn't have the opportunity to see media platforms from other countries. I only had a worldview from China. Now I can see one thing from different perspectives. When I used WeChat, I often follow some domestic media, such as People's Daily or some other official national news. These China's state media tend to call for patriotic unity, especially during the pandemic. You can obviously see that the propaganda there is different from the foreign media such as some Taiwan's media and some American's media including VOA. While Taiwan's media tend to express more negative information, American VOA seems to be neutral and objective. BBC is also a very objective platform. It usually does not say too much about its own opinions, but objectively describes some facts. Different media express and emphasis news differently. So that I learnt to view the world from an international perspective instead of the perception from a single country. I think that might be the so-called global outlook. I feel that China, Taiwan, the United States and the United Kingdom all have their own reasons. There is no right or wrong.

**我：**你在这一段留学经历当中，你有没有参加过一些跟全球公民有关的一些活动？

**Me: During your study abroad, have you participated in any activities related to gaining global citizenship?**

学生：我觉得应该是有一些的，比方说的话，我之前就说过，我们学校有一个叫做 International Cafe的一个每周活动，就是可以不同国家的学生都可以过来，大学生也可以，研究生也可以，博士生也可以。然后校方会准备一些个比如说咖啡或者是一些个饮料甜点之类的，大家就可以愉快地聊一聊。我和他们聊比方说你是哪个国家的，或者说你们国家会有什么样的节日，你们国家会有怎么样的一些重要的活动。学了很多以前电视上都没有看到过的其它国家有趣的事。以后在校园见到他们，就像朋友一样打招呼。

然后第二个的话，还有这边教堂每周会组织一个活动，总之针对的就是留学生，我每次去的时候会参与讨论一个有趣的话题，比方说关于什么叫情人节，然后会说你们那边怎么结婚的，然后我就给他们讲如说我表姐怎么结婚的，然后他们当地人也会告诉我说，比如说那人的儿子怎么结婚的，还给我看照片。我就好奇地听一下，真的可以了解大家文化的不同和相同点。

Student: I think there are some. For example, as I said before, there is a weekly activity called International Cafe in my university, which encourages students from different countries to attend, including undergraduate students, postgraduates and doctoral students. Then the university prepared something like coffee, soft drinks and desserts so that everyone can have a pleasant conversation. I would talk to them about what country they are from, or what kind of festivals held in their countries, and what kind of important events happened in their countries. I learned a lot of interesting things about other countries that I hadn't seen on TV before. When I see those other international students on campus, I greet them like friends.

Secondly, there is an event organized by our local church every week for international students. Every time I went there, I participate in the discussion of an interesting topic. For example, we had a session to talk about valentine's Day. We also discussed the marriage topic. I told them how my cousin got married, while the local people told me about their wedding traditions. I remember a person told me how his son got married and showed me the pictures. I was very curious to listen to those stories. Through the conversations, I really learnt the differences and similarities across various cultures.

... ..

**我：**通过这段在英国的留学生活，你对全球化有没有什么新的看法？

**Me: Do you have any new ideas about globalisation during your study in the UK?**

我觉得全球化的话，现在其实体现了一个就是说大家之前都在说全球化是一种不可逆的趋势，或者说他怎么好，但是的话如果从另一种角度，从疫情的话，就可以看出来全球化其实有弊端的。就是说，比方现在全球的新冠疫情，它就会殃及到所有的国，其实是全球化的一个弊端。你要是说在以前的时候，那时候流行病都是一个国家之内，他就不会造成这么大的一个损失。而且全球化除了国家之间的，还有行业之间的，比方说他现在就是因为国际分工越来越明确了，比方说一个行业受到了损失之后，它立马就会连锁反应，这一片行业都不行。其实它这是全球化的一些弊端。

然后但是全球化确实就是说它的好处还是要大于它的一些个弊端的。比方说，他可以促进社会国家的一种全面进步。比方说，现在中国和美国，如果没有全球化，他们俩都是独立的，谁也不知道谁，他们俩就没有一个竞争关系了，但是他们都处在全球化，比方说今天苹果出了一款手机，它性能非常好，这边华为就要出一个新款手机。两边就会有竞争关系，它就会促进共同发展。最后的话了，全球化其实主要是更有利于那些比较落后的一些国家，比方说非洲地区，或者说是一些南美地区，他们其实是会赶上一些全球化的福利，比方说这些人就会到欧洲去当难民什么的，那么其实也就一两代就过上好的生活了。

Student: As far as I am concerned, globalisation is now a fact that everyone has been saying that it is an irreversible trend and that it is good. However, if we look at it from another perspective, from the current situation, we can see that globalisation actually has disadvantages. In other words, the current COVID-19 pandemic affects all countries, which is actually a disadvantage of globalisation. If in the old days, when epidemic was just within a country, it wouldn't have caused such a big loss globally. Besides, globalisation is not only between countries, but also between industries. For example, the international division of labour is becoming more and more clear. Moreover, once an industry suffers decline, it would immediately have a chain reaction. In fact, it is some of the disadvantages of globalisation.

But globalisation does mean that its benefits outweigh disadvantages. It promotes an overall advancement of the humanity. For example, China and the United States, without globalisation, both are independent without any competitive relationship. But now due to globalisation, they are competing with each other. When Apple comes out with a very good phone, Huawei is going to develop a new phone. There exists a competition between the two sides, which promotes mutual development. Lastly, globalisation is more conducive to those poor developing countries, such as those in Africa and South American region. Those countries can share the welfare of other developed countries in the globalisation. For instance, some of those people could immigrate to Europe as refugees. Then after one or two generations, they can live a good life.

我：你现在觉得全球公民是什么样的人？你觉得你算一个全球公民吗？

Me: What is a global citizen for you now? Do you consider yourself as a global citizen?

学生：我觉得我应该是算一个全球公民，因为全球公民必须要有几个特点，第一个特点就是接受，可以接受不同的观点，而且是可以从不同的角度去出发去看同一个问题。像我刚才说的，就是比如说对待一个问题的时候，我可以从不同的角度去出发，不同的国家，不同公民的身份出发看一个问题。

第二点，我必须要去拥抱全球化，不能说排斥全球化。我会考虑全局。比如说空间的，就是说中国的一带一路，你不能说光看到你中国自己，你要看到说亚洲或者说世界这样一个是空间的。然后是时间上面的，你不能说是比如中国现在帮助一些非洲的个国家，有的人就说你们是不是应该把这笔钱用在国家建设之类的？我觉得应该是该花这笔钱，因为暂时是肯定没有收益的。但是长久来看，它应该是会在几十年之后应该会有成效。

**Student:** I think I'm a global citizen. Because a global citizen must have several characteristics. The first character is being able to accept different viewpoints and look at the same issue from different perspectives. As I said just now, when dealing with a problem, I can approach it from different angles, from different nations and from citizens of different identities.

Secondly, I have to embrace globalisation, not reject it. I can think holistically with a big picture in mind. For example, China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative is spatial. You should not only see China as an isolated part but linking it with Asia and the world as a whole space. Then we should also think in long term. For example, China is now helping some African countries. Some people say that we should use this money for China's own development. I think it is right to spend the money outside China. There is certainly revenue for China now. But in the long run, it should pay off decades later.

**我：你觉得在英国的留学经历对提高你的全球公民素养帮助大吗？**

**Me: Do you think studying in the UK has helped you to become a global citizen?**

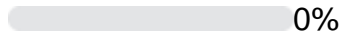
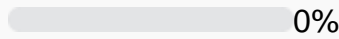
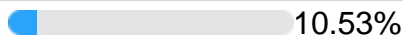
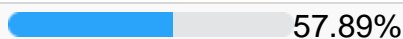
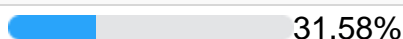
学生：我觉得非常的大。我觉得我现在的的一个心态就是看待不同的一些新闻，不同的一些言论，我会更加的平和。不会像是来英国之前，比方说看到一些不太友好的新闻就会去比较生气，现在更加的平和。就是说，首先看到一个新闻不会去想，他说的是对还是错的。我会站在他人的角度想，这个事到底是怎么一个逻辑，有没有道理？如果有道理的话，我觉得别人即便只是站在自己的角度，我觉得他也是正确的。然后不会说是凭着爱国感情去做事或者说别人怎么样，因为我视角开拓了。我以前是从中国媒体的视角来看世界和思考，现在可以从全局视角分析事情了。

**Student:** I think it helped a lot. Now I have a more moderate and peaceful mindset to look at different news and different opinions. Unlike before I came to the UK, I got angry when I saw some unfriendly news and comments (about China). In other words, when I heard a global issue now, I don't judge what went wrong and right. I would consider others' perspective to understand the underlying logic and whether it makes sense. If it makes sense, I think the other person is right even if he is just standing on his own point of view. Now, I don't blame on others and do things based on patriotic

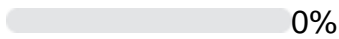
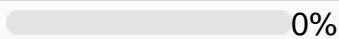
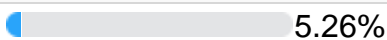
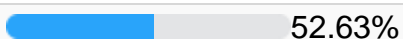
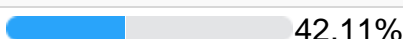
feelings, because my perspective is broadened. I used to see the world and think from the perspective of Chinese media. Now I can analyse things from a global perspective.

## G. Questionnaire and Results at the end of study abroad

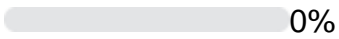
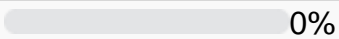
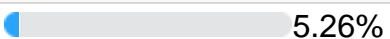
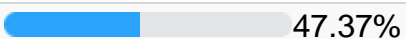
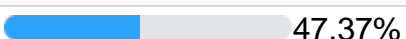
Q1. The past year of studying abroad has deepened your understanding of globalisation 过去这一年的留学经历加深了你对全球化的认识

Strongly disagree 很不同意	0	 0%
Disagree 不同意	0	 0%
Neutral 一般	2	 10.53%
Agree 同意	11	 57.89%
Strongly Agree 很同意	6	 31.58%

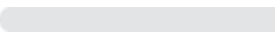
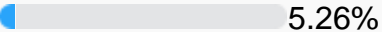
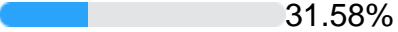
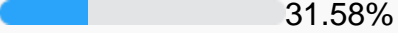
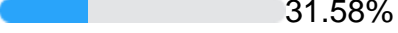
Q2. The study abroad experience improves your respect and understanding of people from different cultures 留学经历提高了你对来自不同文化背景的人的尊重和理解

Strongly disagree 很不同意	0	 0%
Disagree 不同意	0	 0%
Neutral 一般	1	 5.26%
Agree 同意	10	 52.63%
Strongly Agree 很同意	8	 42.11%

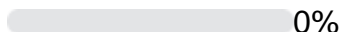
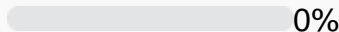

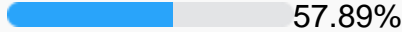
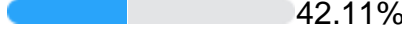
Q3. The experience of studying abroad deepens your understanding of the world and diverse cultures 留学经历加深了你对世界和多元文化的了解

Strongly disagree 很不同意	0	 0%
Disagree 不同意	0	 0%
Neutral 一般	1	 5.26%
Agree 同意	9	 47.37%
Strongly Agree 很同意	9	 47.37%

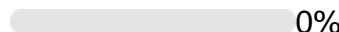
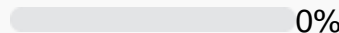
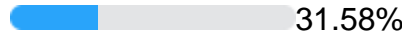
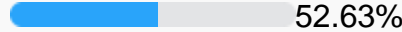
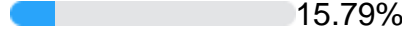
Q4. During your study, you use international media and social platforms (such as YouTube, BBC, Facebook, Instagram) to receive more information and connect with friends from different countries. 在留学期间中，你利用国际媒体和社交平台（如 YouTube, BBC, Facebook, Instagram）来接收更多的信息和联系各国朋友

Strongly disagree 很不同意	0	 0%
Disagree 不同意	1	 5.26%
Neutral 一般	6	 31.58%
Agree 同意	6	 31.58%
Strongly Agree 很同意	6	 31.58%

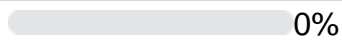
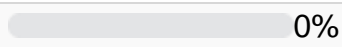
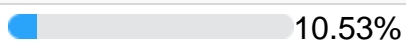
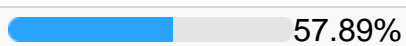
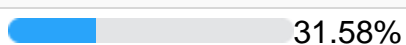
Q5. The study abroad experience helps you reflect on your worldview and develop critical thinking skill. 留学经历有助于你反思自己的世界观和提高批判性思考能力

Strongly disagree 很不同意	0	 0%
Disagree 不同意	0	 0%
Neutral 一般	0	 0%
Agree 同意	11	 57.89%
Strongly Agree 很同意	8	 42.11%



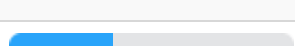
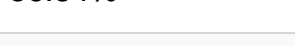


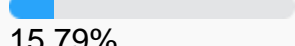
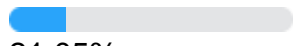
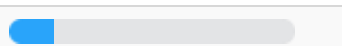
Q6. While studying abroad, you had more opportunities to improve your intercultural communication skill through teamwork. 留学期间,你有更多机会通过团队合作提高跨文化交际力

Strongly disagree 很不同意	0	 0%
Disagree 不同意	0	 0%
Neutral 一般	6	 31.58%
Agree 同意	10	 52.63%
Strongly Agree 很同意	3	 15.79%

Q7. The study abroad experience increased your awareness of international development and participation in various social activities 留学经历增强了你对关注全球发展和参加各种社会活动的意识

Strongly disagree 很不同意	0	 0%
Disagree 不同意	0	 0%
Neutral 一般	2	 10.53%
Agree 同意	11	 57.89%
Strongly Agree 很同意	6	 31.58%

Q8. What have you learned most from your overseas study experience? Please choose two below. 留学经历给你带来的最大收获是什么? 请从中选择 2 项。

Gained subject knowledge 学科知识	5	 26.32%
Improved global outlook 提高国际视野	9	 47.37%
Cultivated critical thinking 培养批判性思维	7	 36.84%
Deepen understanding of different cultures 深入了解不同文化	5	 26.32%
Experienced foreign lifestyles 体验异国风情	2	 10.53%
Enhanced employment advantages 提高就业优势	3	 15.79%
Improved English language skill 提高英语运用能力	4	 21.05%
Cultivated independence 培养独立生活能力	3	 15.79%
Extended social network 拓展人际社交网络	0	 0%



## H. Ethics Application Form

Institute of Education



### Doctoral Student Ethics Application Form

Anyone conducting research under the auspices of the Institute of Education (staff, students or visitors) where the research involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants, is required to gain ethical approval before starting. This includes preliminary and pilot studies. Please answer all relevant questions in simple terms that can be understood by a lay person and note that your form may be returned if incomplete.

#### Registering your study with the UCL Data Protection Officer as part of the UCL Research Ethics Review Process

If you are proposing to collect personal data i.e. data from which a living individual can be identified **you must be registered with the UCL Data Protection Office before you submit your ethics application for review**. To do this, email the complete ethics form to [data-protection@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@ucl.ac.uk). Once your registration number is received, add it to the form\* and submit it to your supervisor for approval. If the Data Protection Office advises you to make changes to the way in which you propose to collect and store the data this should be reflected in your ethics application form.

**Please note that the completion of the UCL GDPR online training is mandatory for all PhD students. The link is here: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/ucl-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/gdpr-online-training>**

#### Section 1 Project details

a.	Project title	Becoming a Global Citizen Through Study Abroad: A Longitudinal Study of Chinese Postgraduate Students' Experience in the UK	
b.	Student name and ID number (e.g. ABC12345678)	TAO15141773	
c.	*UCL Data Protection Registration Number	Z6364106/2019/04/105 Date issued 12/04/2019	
c.	Supervisor/Personal Tutor	Prof. Douglas Bourn	
d.	Department	Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment	
e.	Course category (Tick one)	PhD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EdD <input type="checkbox"/>
		<del>DEdPsy</del> <input type="checkbox"/>	
f.	If applicable, state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed.	N/A	
g.	Intended research start date	01/09/2019	
h.	Intended research end date	30/09/2020	
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in	the UK	

November 2018

<p><i>If research to be conducted abroad please check <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk">www.fco.gov.uk</a> and submit a completed travel risk assessment form (see guidelines). If the FCO advice is against travel this will be required before ethical approval can be granted:</i></p> <p><a href="http://ioenet.inst.ioe.ac.uk/about/profservices/international/Pages/default.aspx">http://ioenet.inst.ioe.ac.uk/about/profservices/international/Pages/default.aspx</a></p>	
j.	Has this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee?
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
	External Committee Name:
	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ⇒ go to Section 2
	Date of Approval:
<p><b>If yes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Submit a copy of the approval letter with this application.</li> <li>– Proceed to Section 10 Attachments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the <a href="#">National Research Ethics Service (NRES)</a> or <a href="#">Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC)</a>. In addition, if your research is based in another institution then you may be required to apply to their research ethics committee.</p>	

## Section 2 Research methods summary (tick all that apply)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interviews        | <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled trial/other intervention study                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus groups                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of personal records  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Questionnaires    | <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic review ⇒ <i>if only method used go to Section 5.</i>              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Action research              | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary data analysis ⇒ <i>if secondary analysis used go to Section 6.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Observation                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Advisory/consultation/collaborative groups                                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literature review | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, give details:   |

Please provide an overview of the project, focusing on your methodology. This should include some or all of the following: purpose of the research, aims, main research questions, research design, participants, sampling, data collection (including justifications for methods chosen and description of topics/questions to be asked), reporting and dissemination. Please focus on your methodology; the theory, policy, or literary background of your work can be provided in an attached document (i.e. a full research proposal or case for support document). *Minimum 150 words required.*

Given the increasing number of Chinese students who study abroad with the hope of becoming global citizens and under the impact of globalization, this research project investigates the relationship between Chinese postgraduate students' global citizenship (GC) and their one-year study abroad experience in two prestigious and globalised universities in the UK. Drawing on the evidence from literature review and the interest of the researcher, this study identifies becoming a global citizen as a multifaceted concept and multidimensional process formed by two parts: students' changing perception of GC and their improvement on global skills during studying abroad. This research aims to answer the main question on how and to what extent do Chinese international postgraduate students develop GC and global skills through one-year living and studying in the UK.

To gain a comprehensive insight of Chinese students' understanding of GC and development of global skills, the research project is designed as a one-year longitudinal case study of Chinese international students who begin their postgraduate course in September 2019. The longitudinal study applies a qualitative method composing of an initial questionnaire and three sets of semi-structured interviews at the beginning, middle and the end of the one-year programme. The research begins with a mid-scale questionnaire/survey of 40 to 50 postgraduate students of different majors (Education, Engineer and Management) from University College London and University of Bath. The aim of conducting the questionnaire is to initially identify student's general opinion on GC and select 10 to 12

students for further interviews. Three sets of interviews will be undertaken with each student at the beginning, middle and final stage of their programme, thereby fulfilling the longitudinal basis of this study.

As becoming global citizen involves students' changing perception on their global identity and acquiring global skills for their global engagement (Bourn, 2018), the research explores GC through both value-based and skill-based approach. The research starts with a value-based approach to survey students' perception of themselves as global citizen and their perspective on GC. To analyse students' perception of and perspective on GC, the study interprets students' view through three lenses (neoliberal, cosmopolitan, critical pedagogical) and provide an insightful understanding of the ways in which GC is manifested in students' living experience. After mapping out students' perspective on GC, the research applies skill-based approach through in-depth interviews to explore students' global skill development during their learning experience. The study applies a seven dimensions/themes GC assessment framework based on Douglas Bourn's *A New Framework for Global Skills as outlined in Understanding Global Skills for 21<sup>st</sup> Professions (2018)*. The seven-dimensional framework includes key elements of GC as: global identity and awareness, global value and outlook, global knowledge and understanding, global digital literacy and information evaluation, global critical learning and reflection, global collaboration and networking, global responsibility and engagement. These seven dimensions of GC development are explored with considerable detail in the literature review and will be assessed separately through semi-structured interviews. The research questions focus on: How do Chinese students perceive GC? Is developing GC a main motivation and aim for Chinese students to study in the UK? If so, what type of global skills are developed through the one-year programme? The approach to analysis was characterised by thematic coding with a focus on understanding the themes and elements in the field of GC from the narrative accounts gathered from the interview data.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of the research is to find out the relationship between GC development and study abroad. To be more specific, the research focus is on Chinese postgraduate students' one-year study experience in two prestigious universities in the UK. The main research question is "How does studying abroad impact upon Chinese students' perception of GC and development of global skills. There are four sub-questions closely related to the main research question:

1. Why do Chinese students choose to study in the UK and what type of global skills do they wish to gain through the study abroad experience?
2. To what extent do Chinese students consider developing global citizenship or gaining global skills as a purpose of studying abroad?
3. What is Chinese students' perceptions of global citizenship and themselves as global citizens?
4. What is the impact of study abroad programmes on Chinese students' sense of being global citizens and the development of their global skills?

The awareness and attitudes of Chinese students towards GC and global skills, which are examined by the first three research questions, provide a background for the exploration of the fourth question. To illuminate the general by looking at particular cases, the research proposes that a case study including analysis of data collected through a questionnaire and interviews could gain common and detailed perceptions on the four research questions from the particular group and could have implications for the exploration of the relationship between GC and studying abroad.

### **Research Scope**

#### The selection of a sample

This study intends to find a way of investigating the relationship between developing GC and study abroad. It was undertaken to investigate the Chinese postgraduate students' perceptions on the effect of study abroad at the two universities: University College London, a metropolitan university located in the center of London and University of Bath, a campus university located in a traditional and historical British town. Due to the feature of location of

the two universities, students' living experience are in contrast as urban life and town life. Instead of focusing on only one university, it provides a more fair and holistic picture on investigating two different types of university at the same time.

Chinese students were chosen for this study based on three reasons. Firstly, I am from mainland China and I understand the culture and background of those students. It is easy for me to access and communicate with Chinese students. Secondly, Chinese students from mainland China are an important and dramatically increasing part of the overseas student body in the UK. Thirdly, GC development emerges in recent years as a new desirable outcome for Chinese students to pursue international education. Educational research and framework is urgently needed to understand and address the issue of GC construction for Chinese students.

There are three restrictions in selection of student samples in this research project. The first is that only Chinese students from mainland China are included in this study because it is more effective to focus on the group of students from mainland China who had similar educational and social experience. In addition, it should be noted here that the Chinese students selected for this study are not a representative sample of all mainland Chinese people. The second restriction is that the samples restricted to postgraduate Chinese students on taught programmes who have no previous study abroad experience before (who accomplished their undergraduate degree in China) and will stay in the UK for approximately a year. Because postgraduate taught courses take only one full-time year in the UK, it might be easier for these students to realize the differences and development in their ideas about GC by comparing before, during and after studying abroad. The third restriction is that these taught postgraduate Chinese students are controlled in three subjects (business management, engineering, education), in which most taught postgraduate mainland Chinese students studied according to the two universities' statistics. There is an estimated number of 200 Chinese students will be enrolled in those three subjects in UCL and 100 will be enrolled in the same subjects in University of Bath. However, as those courses will start in September 2019, the exact number of Chinese students will be requested near the beginning of the term from the administration officers of all the course.

#### Research Question Design

The framework to assess GC development is based on Douglas Bourn's *A New Framework for Global Skills (2018)*. In the research project, these elements of GC will be used as indicators to measure students' GC development. The form below will be the baseline to design students' survey questions, contents in the interview questions and topics in the case study.

**Table 1. GC Development Indicators**

Theme	Indicator
Perception of and Perspective on global citizenship	three lenses (neoliberal, cosmopolitan, critical pedagogical)
Global identity and awareness	An ability to see the connections between what is happening in your own community and in the communities of people elsewhere in the world
Global value and outlook	Recognition of what it means to live and work in a global society and of the value of having a broad global outlook that respects, listens to and values perspectives other than one's own.
Global knowledge and understanding	An ability to understand the impact of global forces on one's life and the lives of other people, and what this means in terms of a sense of place in the world.
Global digital literacy and information reflection	Understanding of the value of ICT and how best to use it, in a way that is self-reflective and critical, that questions data and information.
Global critical learning	Openness to a continued process of self-reflection, critical dialogue and questioning of one's own assumptions about the world.

Global collaboration and networking	Ability to work with others who may have different viewpoints and perspectives, being prepared to change one's opinions as a result of working with others and seeking cooperative and participatory ways of working.
Global responsibility and engagement	Confidence, belief and willingness to seek a more just and sustainable world

## Methodology

In order to explore students' perceptions and outcome of their study abroad experience, this study applies qualitative methods to collect and analysis data, as qualitative research is a research method that emphasizes narratives and experience of study subjects rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). The research applies a qualitative and interpretative approach within a longitudinal case study which consists of questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The research questions are addressed using a questionnaire of 40 to 50 students, followed by in-depth interview of 10 to 12 students based on the questionnaire result. Three sets of interviews will be undertaken with each student: near the beginning, at the middle and at the end of their one-year master's degree study programme. The interpretative research method of combining questionnaire and in-depth interview provides both general perceptions of the sample with a relatively wide coverage and deep, detailed, personal and practical information from a few samples selected deliberately from the results of the questionnaire.

### Questionnaire

The questionnaire will be expressed in both Chinese and English. The reasons are: firstly, the exact meanings of some terms related to GC such as the 'global mindset' might be misunderstood by Chinese speakers without translation; Secondly, as the thinking style and vocabulary of samples are reflected more accurately in Chinese. By having questionnaires in two languages and answers to questions in Chinese, this will avoid misunderstanding and facilitate accuracy in the answering.

Considering the likely response rate and the availability of resources, 100 questionnaires will be distributed to taught postgraduate Chinese students in both universities by email and on students' Wechat group with an expected response rate of 50%. The aimed amount of questionnaire returned is 40 to 50. If the number of responded questionnaire is much lower than 40, I will seek permission from both universities to go the students' classroom (after class) to speak with students and conduct survey in person.

### Table 2. Example Survey Questions

Students will give answers on 1-5 scale points based on the extent they agree with each statement.

1	I have some knowledge and understanding of global citizenship
2	I consider myself as a global citizen
3	Developing global citizenship is part of my motivation for study abroad
4	I believe study abroad can enhance my global citizenship development
5	Most people who are important to me think that being a global citizen is desirable
6	To which degree I think I have developed global mindset and global outlook
7	I would like to develop my global skills during study abroad
8	I would like to take part in the interview stage of the research project

### In-depth interview

Denscombe (2009) argues that the interview is a suitable method of collecting data for research projects that aim at developing a deeper understanding of complex issues and process. According to Kyle (2009), the interview as a research method can allow researchers to gain a greater insight into the relations between individuals and their experience. Since this study focuses on students' perceptions of abstract concept and intangible skills, it is necessary to use a method which could enable the creation of such an understanding. Yet another reason behind the choice of

face to face interview as the method of data collection is the fact that the concept of global citizenship and global skills is still vague for Chinese students, Esaiasson et al. (2012) point out that face to face interviews are useful when the purpose of the research is to study an unfamiliar topic.

According to the results from the questionnaire data, 10 to 12 students will be interviewed three times at the beginning of their study, in the middle of their study and by the end of their study. As there will be three sets of interviews during a period of one academic year, some students might drop out. I will recruit 15 students initially to take part in the interview to ensure that there are a minimum number of 8 students accomplish the interview.

Interviews will be conducted face to face in the Chinese language. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Students are asked to check the transcriptions before all data are documented. The initial interviews will be conducted at the beginning of the autumn term in 2019. Each interview lasts between 30 and 60 minutes and covered topics including;

- Students' motivations to study abroad, including the relationship between GC development and their study plan, what they hoped to gain and what influenced their decision on study abroad.
- Students' understandings of the concept 'global citizenship', whether they saw themselves as 'global citizens'.
- Students' perceptions of any links between their study abroad experience and global citizenship development.
- Students' ability to see the connections between issues happening in China and elsewhere in the world.
- Student's recognition of what it means to live and work in a global society and of the value of having a broad global outlook that respects, listens to and values perspectives from different culture.
- Student's ability to understand the impact of global forces on their life and the lives of other people, and what this means in terms of a sense of place in the world.
- Students' understanding of the value of ICT and how best to use it, in a way that is self-reflective and critical, that questions data and information.
- Students' openness to a continued process of self-reflection, critical dialogue and questioning of one's own assumptions about the world.
- Student's ability to study and live with others who may have different viewpoints and perspectives, being prepared to change one's opinions as a result of studying with others and seeking cooperative and participatory ways of networking.
- Students' confidence, belief and willingness to seek a more just and sustainable world.

The second interview will take place in the middle of the students' postgraduate programme. As the students will already have six months study and living experience in the UK before the second interview, the interview questions will focus on the changing of students' perception of themselves as global citizen and the improvement of their global skills from the seven indicators. Interview questions will be related to:

- How students feel about their study abroad experience in the past six months.
- What impact those experience have had on shaping them into global citizens.  
What global skills they have improved during their learning and living experience.
- The third interview will be taken at the end of the students' study abroad and before they go back to China.

The third interviews will be more flexible and less structured comparing with the two previous interviews. In that stage, the students will be encouraged to tell their whole story of their study abroad journey and the relevance of their journey to becoming global citizens. The interview question will be related be:

- What global skills have you gained from the journey and how did those learning processes happen?
- Do you think the one-year study abroad experience contributes to making you a global citizen?
- What is the most impressive experience you have had regarding becoming a global citizen?

### Section 3 Research Participants (tick all that apply)

- Early years/pre-school
- Ages 5-11
- Ages 12-16
- Young people aged 17-18

- Adults *please specify below*
- Unknown – specify below
- No participants

Postgraduate Students aged 22-32

**NB:** Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the [National Research Ethics Service \(NRES\)](#) or [Social Care Research Ethics Committee \(SCREC\)](#).

### Section 4 Security-sensitive material (only complete if applicable)

Security sensitive research includes: commissioned by the military; commissioned under an EU security call; involves the acquisition of security clearances; concerns terrorist or extreme groups.

- |    |   |                                |  |
|----|---|--------------------------------|--|
| a. | Will your project consider or encounter security-sensitive material?  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> * | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b. | Will you be visiting websites associated with extreme or terrorist organisations?                                     | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> * | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c. | Will you be storing or transmitting any materials that could be interpreted as promoting or endorsing terrorist acts? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> * | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

\* Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues**

### Section 5 Systematic reviews of research (only complete if applicable)

- |    |  |                                |                             |
|----|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. | Will you be collecting any new data from participants? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> * | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. | Will you be analysing any secondary data?              | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> * | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

\* Give further details in **Section 8 Ethical Issues**

If your methods do not involve engagement with participants (e.g. systematic review, literature review) **and** if you have answered **No** to both questions, please go to **Section 8 Attachments**.

### Section 6 Secondary data analysis (only complete if applicable)

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| a. | Name of dataset/s  |  |
| b. | Owner of dataset/s   |  |
| c. | Are the data in the public domain?   | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|    |  | <i>If no, do you have the owner's permission/license?</i><br>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No* <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. | Are the data special category personal data (i.e. personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation)? | Yes* <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| e. | Will you be conducting analysis within the remit it was originally collected for?  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No* <input type="checkbox"/>  |

f.	If no, was consent gained from participants for subsequent/future analysis?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No* <input type="checkbox"/>
g.	If no, was data collected prior to ethics approval process?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No* <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><i>* Give further details in <b>Section 8 Ethical Issues</b></i></p> <p><i>If secondary analysis is only method used <b>and</b> no answers with asterisks are ticked, go to <b>Section 9 Attachments.</b></i></p>			
<p><b>Section 7 Data Storage and Security</b></p> <p><i>Please ensure that you include all hard and electronic data when completing this section.</i></p>			
a.	<b>Data subjects</b> - Who will the data be collected from?	Chinese Postgraduate Students Studying in the UK	
b.	<b>What data will be collected?</b> Please provide details of the type of personal data to be collected	Questionnaire forms and voice records from interviews regarding their living experience in the UK	
c.	<b>Is the data anonymised?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No* <input type="checkbox"/>
	Do you plan to anonymise the data?	Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	Do you plan to use individual level data?	Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	Do you plan to pseudonymise the data?	Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><i>* Give further details in <b>Section 8 Ethical Issues</b></i></p>			
e.	<b>i. Disclosure</b> – Who will the results of your project be disclosed to?	my supervisor	
	<b>ii. Disclosure</b> – Will personal data be disclosed as part of your project?	NO	
f.	<b>Data storage</b> – Please provide details on how and where the data will be stored i.e. UCL network, encrypted USB stick**, encrypted laptop** etc.	encrypted laptop	
	** Advanced Encryption Standard <u>256 bit</u> encryption which has been made a security standard within the NHS		
g..	<b>Data Safe Haven (Identifiable Data Handling Solution)</b> – Will the personal identifiable data collected and processed as part of this research be stored in the UCL Data Safe Haven (mainly used by SLMS divisions, institutes and departments)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h.	How long will the data and records be kept for and in what format?	5 years in audio record format	
	Will personal data be processed or be sent outside the European Economic Area? (If yes, please confirm that there are adequate levels of protections in compliance with GDPR and state what these arrangements are)	No	
	Will data be archived for use by other researchers? (If yes, please provide details.)	No	



i.	If personal data is used as part of your project, describe what measures you have in place to ensure that the data is only used for the research purpose e.g. <del>pseudonymisation</del> and short retention period of data'
	* Give further details in <b>Section 8 Ethical Issues</b>

## Section 8 Ethical issues

Please state clearly the ethical issues which may arise in the course of this research and how will they be addressed.

**All** issues that may apply should be addressed. Some examples are given below, further information can be found in the guidelines. *Minimum 150 words required.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Methods</li> <li>- Sampling</li> <li>- Recruitment</li> <li>- Gatekeepers</li> <li>- Informed consent</li> <li>- Potentially vulnerable participants</li> <li>- Safeguarding/child protection</li> <li>- Sensitive topics</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- International research</li> <li>- Risks to participants and/or researchers</li> <li>- Confidentiality/Anonymity</li> <li>- Disclosures/limits to confidentiality</li> <li>- Data storage and security both during and after the research (including transfer, sharing, encryption, protection)</li> <li>- Reporting</li> <li>- Dissemination and use of findings</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

Based on the guideline in UCL Statement on Research Integrity, the research will be led in compliance with BERA – British Educational Research Association Guidelines (2018) and ethical considerations will be thoroughly addressed in the ethics approval application to the UCL Institute of Education’s Research Ethics Committee (REC).

### Methods

The research applies a qualitative approach of questionnaire and in-depth interview. As this research project involves in semi-structured interview with adult students about their study and living experience, the main ethical issue will be honesty, confidentiality, respect and transparency. I must honestly explain to the interviewees about the intentions and procedures of my research and make sure they understand the context of the research. The purpose of the research and the approximate time commitment which is 5 minutes for questionnaire and three 30 minutes sessions for interview will be stated at the beginning of the questionnaire and the information sheet of the interview. The interviewee will be given both Consent Form and Information Sheet before they decide to take part in the interview.

The procedures for each interview are laid out in the Information Sheet and will be clearly explained to interviewees before interview. I will make sure the interviewees are happy and secured with the location of the interview. As the interview will be hold face to face or on the Skype on a one-to-one base, I will choose somewhere private and safe for interviewees. I must inform the interviewee their right of withdraw from the research project at any stage on the consent form and remind them verbally at the beginning of each interview.

### Sampling and Recruitment

The research samples include 40 to 50 students for questionnaire and 10 to 12 students (who also take part in questionnaire) for interview. 100 questionnaires will be distributed to taught postgraduate Chinese students in both universities by email and on students’ Wechat group with an expected response rate of 50%. If the number of responded questionnaire is much lower than 40 and effects the recruitment of interview samples, I will seek

permission from both universities to go the students' classroom (after class) to speak with students and conduct survey in person.

The ideal number of students who take part in the interview is 10-12 and I will prepare if some of them opt-out for the interviews. Based on the results from the questionnaire data, 15 students will be selected to take part voluntarily in the interview stage. As there will be three sets of interviews during a period of one academic year, some students might drop out. Recruiting 15 students initially to take part in the interview will ensure that there are a minimum number of 10 students to accomplish the interview.

### **Gatekeepers**

The research project will involve interviewing students from two different universities---UCL and Bath. I will make sure the research ethics are in compliance with both universities' regulation. As the research will be go through UCL's ethical committee, I will check with the University of Bath that if I need any additional approval from their ethical committee. At the beginning of the research, introduction and invitation letters will be sent to gatekeepers who are programme leaders and administrators from education, engineering and management departments of both UCL and Bath. I will contact them by email and skype to ask for their consent and help for recruiting students to take part in the research.

### **Informed consent**

The nature of the research will be clearly explained to participants, including its aims and my own role as a doctoral student. All participants will be given Consent Form and Information Sheet at the beginning of the research. I will ensure that participants have enough information to be willing to opt in. Participants will be informed that they have the right to withdraw their consent at any time, or not to participate, without any form of penalty.

### **Confidentiality and anonymity**

An ethical issue around confidentiality arises in that individuals' view and perspective of their experience are being sought. Students might be rightly anxious or worried that what they say will be reported outside of the research process, or whether staffs from their university will judge them on what they say. Full confidentiality will be assured both in writing on information sheet and verbal statement in each session of the interviews. I will make it clear to participants that I will not discuss the content of their interview either formally or informally with any staffs or students in their university.

The students will be anonymised to ensure that they cannot be identified. In my thesis, I will use pseudonyms to make their real name and identify unidentifiable.

### **International Research – Language of research**

All the participants in my research are Chinese postgraduate in the UK who have good understanding of English and might feel more comfortable to express their feeling in Chinese language. Hence, the Consent Form and Information Sheet will be in English language. The questionnaire will be given in English with some explanation in Chinese language to make sure they fully understand my research questions. During the interview session, interview questions will be explained clearly in Chinese and students will be encouraged to answer the questions in Chinese to make them feel confident to discuss topic in depth. As the researcher, I am bilingual in Chinese and English. I will translate the interview questions and data related to findings from Chinese into English. The interview data will be transcribed in Chinese but not translated in English. Translations of the interview questions and some example of students' answers related to findings will be provided in English and attached in the Appendix of the final thesis. All findings of the research will be presented in English in the final thesis of the researcher.

### **Sensitive topics**

As the research project focus on students' study experience, the topic should not involve anything emotional arousing and contain any sensitive information. Some interview questions will concern the interviewee's value and

perspective about their identities, feeling of their experience and opinion on their surroundings. I must respect their answers without any judgment.

As the research aim to understanding students' perception of their identity and skill improvement, which does not include students' views on the teaching and service quality of their universities. I will not ask students give any comment on their universities and staffs who working in their universities in the interviews.

The research questions don't involve in any political discussion such as students' opinion on Chinese government and policy. I will emphasis to students that the research is an educational study without any intension to collect their political views.

If students talk about anything emotionally or politically sensitive, I will treat them without any judgement and stay neutral without any comments on their views. Meanwhile, I will keep all the information confidential and only analyse data related to my research questions.

**Data storage and security both during and after the research**

As the data collected will include personal information and opinions, I must keep the data confidential. All the audio record from the interviews and the transcripts will be kept in my personal computer under password protection during the research. After the research, I will delete all the audio record and keep part of the transcripts in confidential in case I need any future reference.

**Dissemination and use of findings**

In data analysis and interpretation, I must present my finding without bias and presumption. Even if the finding will contradict to my predication and expectation, I must declare the conflicts of negative results openly. The findings will be used only for my PhD thesis which might be published in public domain.

Please confirm that the processing of the data is not likely to cause substantial damage or distress to an individual Yes

**Section 9 Attachments Please attach the following items to this form, or explain if not attached**

a.	Information sheets, consent forms and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research <i>(List attachments below)</i>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	<b><i>If applicable/appropriate:</i></b>		
b.	Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
c.	The proposal ('case for support') for the project		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Full risk assessment		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>

**Section 10 Declaration**

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information in this form is correct and that this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of this project.

I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my supervisor.

I have attended the appropriate ethics training provided by my course.


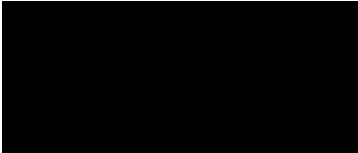
**I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:**

The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this project.

Name	Xi Tao
Date	18/06/2019

**Please submit your completed ethics forms to your supervisor for review.**

**Notes and references**

Project title	Becoming a Global Citizen Through Study Abroad: A Longitudinal Study of Chinese Postgraduate Students' Experience in the UK
<b>Reviewer 1</b>	
Supervisor/first reviewer name	Dr Frances Hunt
Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?	No
Supervisor/first reviewer signature	
Date	22/7/2019
<b>Reviewer 2</b>	
Second reviewer name	Professor Douglas Bourn
Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Supervisor/second reviewer signature	
Date	1/9/19
<b>Decision on behalf of reviews</b>	
Decision	Approved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Approved subject to the following additional measures <input type="checkbox"/>
	Not approved for the reasons given below <input type="checkbox"/>
	Referred to REC for review <input type="checkbox"/>
Points to be noted by other reviewers and in report to REC	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments from reviewers for the applicant	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Once it is approved by both reviewers, students should submit their ethics application form to the Centre for Doctoral Education team: <a href="mailto:IOE.CDE@ucl.ac.uk">IOE.CDE@ucl.ac.uk</a>.</i>	