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

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Research Context

❖ The impact of globalization on and from China.

❖A dramatical increasing number of Chinese students who study abroad.

❖ China's development into a knowledge economy calling for a well-educated human resources with global outlook and skills to engage globally.

Research aim

- To present various perspectives of GC and experience of becoming global citizens from Chinese students' unique approaches, which are distinct from the prevailing Western's sense of GC and previous literatures on GC and study abroad;

- To understand the relationship between GC development and international mobility, with focus on Chinese postgraduate students' lived experience in the UK.

Research Questions
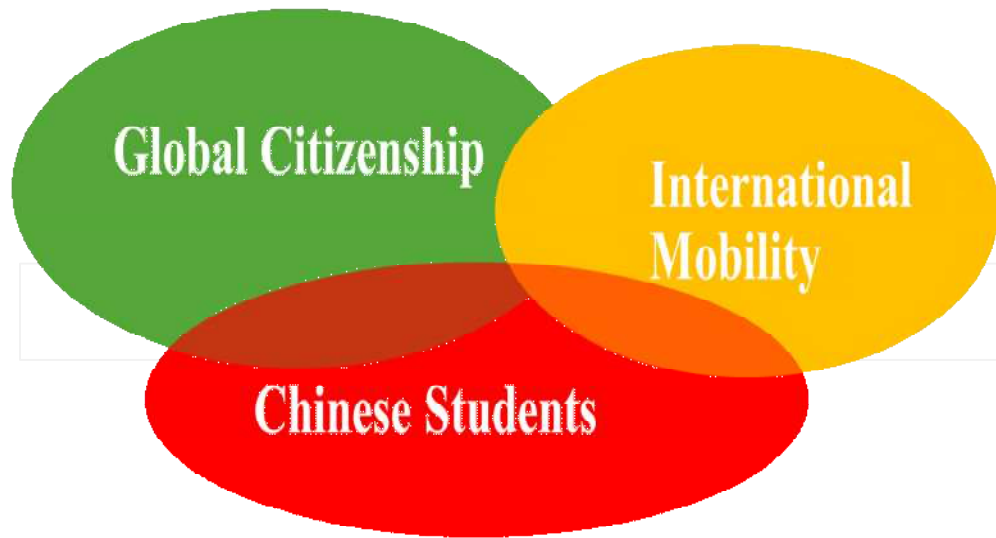
Main Research Question:
**How does study abroad experience influence Chinese students' perception of being global citizens?**

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

Q2: What experience trigger and facilitate students' learning towards becoming global citizens? To what extend is this experience transformative? (experience)

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

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

What is a global citizen?

Value & Attitude **+** **Skills** **=** **Global Citizen**
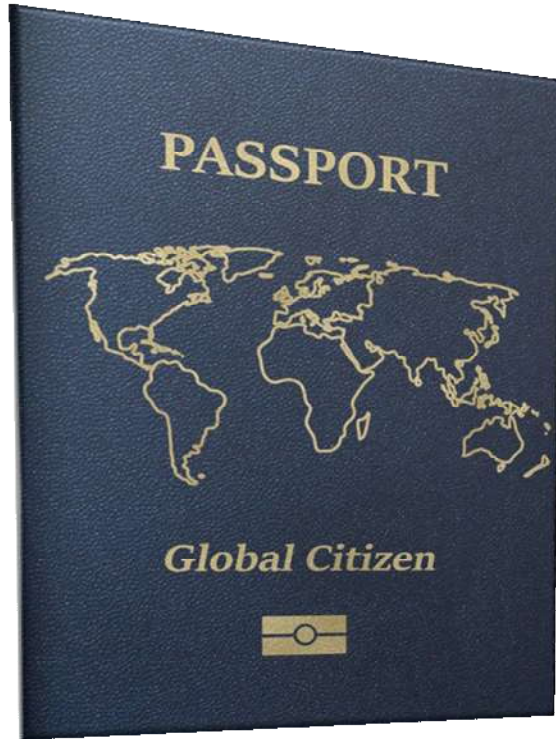
Drawing on the evidence from literature review and my own research interest, this study identifies becoming a global citizen as a value-based and skill-based approach:

❖ Students' changing perception of their worldview and identity.

❖ Students' improvement on global skills during studying abroad.

Bourn (2018): *Understanding Global Skills for 21st Professions*

Theme	Indicator
Perspective on global citizenship	Three lenses (neoliberal, cosmopolitan, critical pedagogical)
Global identity & 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 & outlook	Recognition of what it means to live and work in a global society and having a broad global outlook that respects, listens to and values other perspectives.
Global knowledge & 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	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 engagement & collaboration	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 ways of working.
Global participation & social justice	Confidence, belief and willingness to seek a more just and sustainable world

Methodology and Methods

❖ **Research design**

A ten-month longitudinal case study on Chinese international students who begin their postgraduate course in September 2019 and end in July 2020.

❖ **Data collection: questionnaire and in-depth interview**

A questionnaire of 150 postgraduate students of different majors (Social Science, Science and Business Management) from University College London, University of Reading and University of Bath.

Three sets of semi-structured interviews with 19 students of mixed backgrounds at the beginning, middle and the end of their masters' programme.

A questionnaire for the 19 interviewees at the end of their study abroad journey.
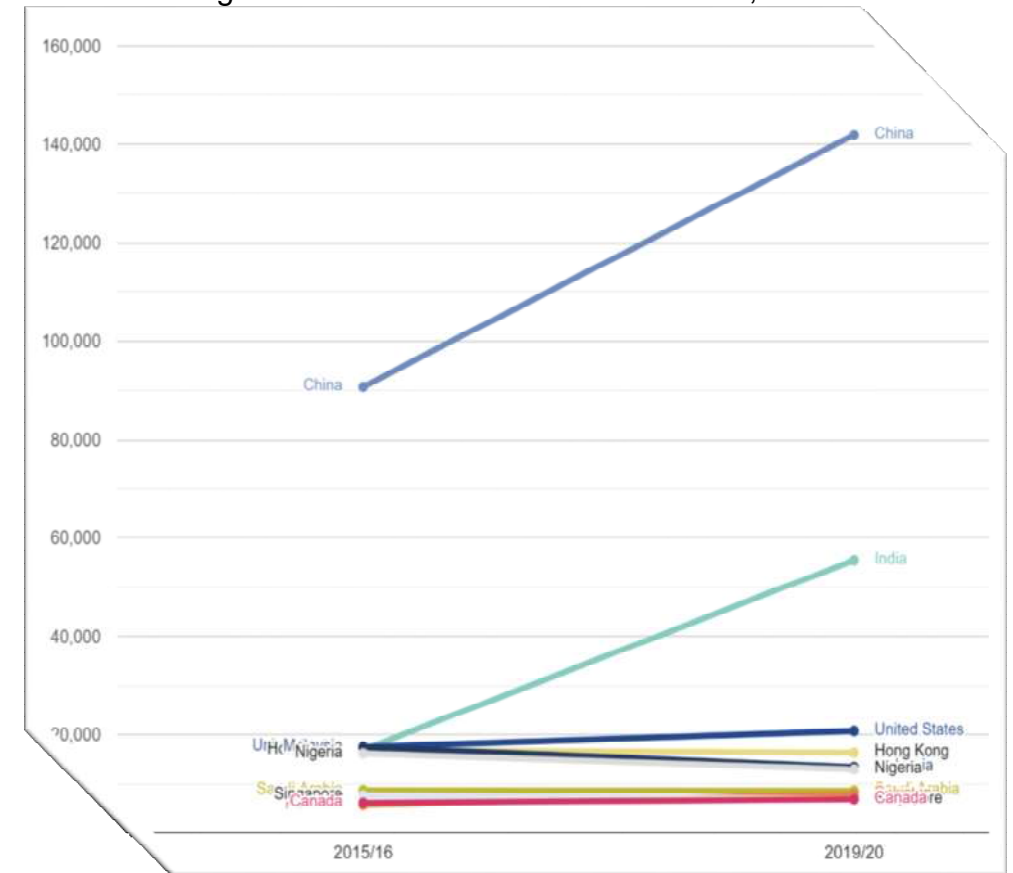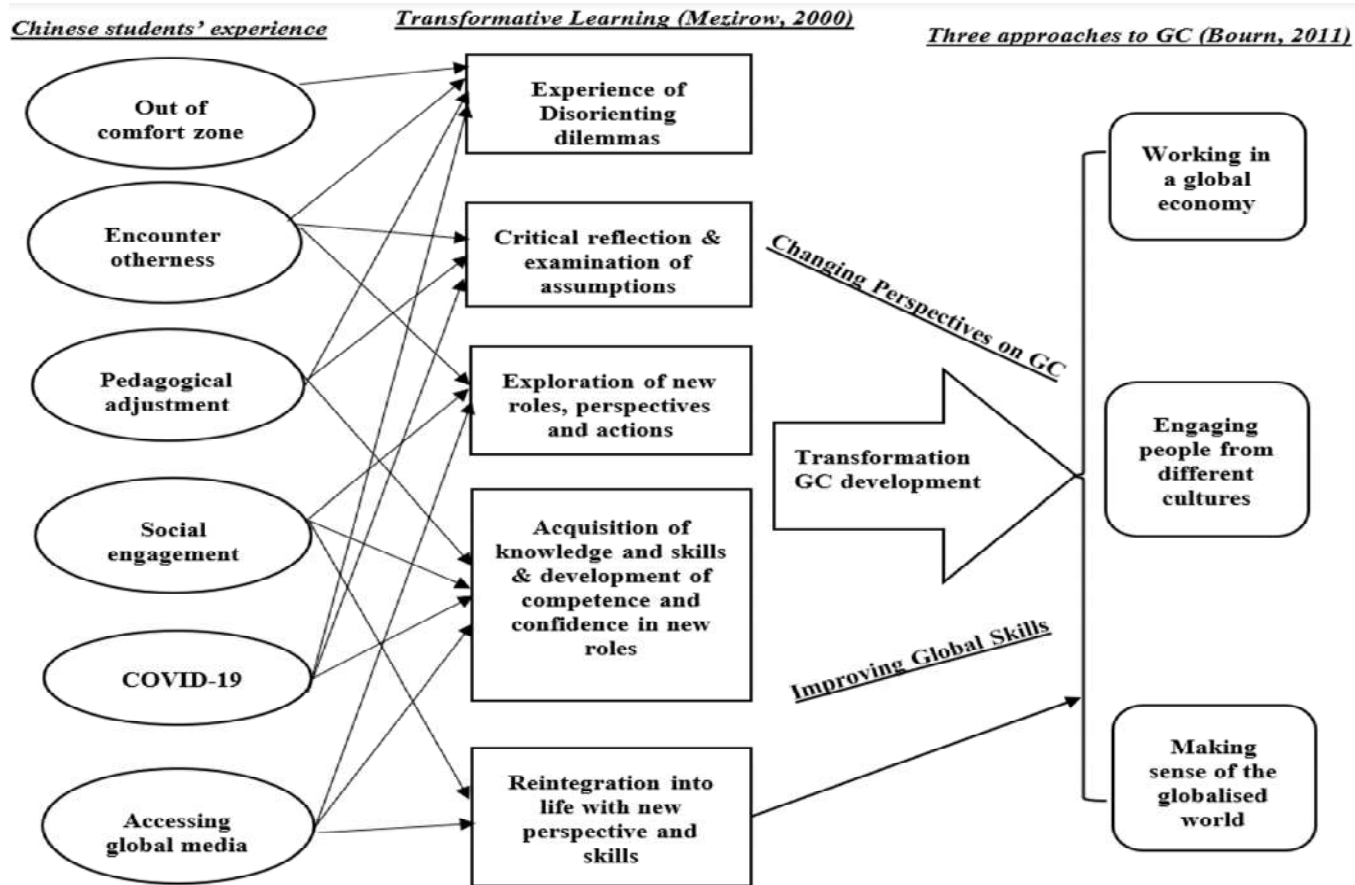
❖ **Thematic data analysis**

Findings 1: GC as a motivation to study abroad

❖ Although not everyone is familiar with the term GC, all the students have some understanding on its related term such as international outlook and global competency.

❖ The majority of Chinese student 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 already had.

❖ Chinese students' motivation of gaining GC through study abroad was generate by their previous international experience, personal interest in western culture, career ambition and family background.

Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2021

Findings 2: Transformative experience towards GC

Chinese students' experience — Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 2000) — Three approaches to GC (Bourn, 2011)

- Out of comfort zone
- Encounter otherness
- Pedagogical adjustment
- Social engagement
- COVID-19
- Accessing global media

- Experience of Disorienting dilemmas
- Critical reflection & examination of assumptions
- Exploration of new roles, perspectives and actions
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills & development of competence and confidence in new roles
- Reintegration into life with new perspective and skills

Transformation GC development

Changing Perspectives on GC

Improving Global Skills

- Working in a global economy
- Engaging people from different cultures
- Making sense of the globalised world

❖ GC development is a form of transformative learning in which Chinese students interact with the globalised world while reflecting on their own belief system, different perspectives, thoughts and actions.

❖ Students' own agencies and efforts on self-reflection and social participation are the key driven forces of their transformative learning and GC development.

Findings 3: Changes of perception on GC

❖ Students' changing perception on what GC is, sense of self in the world, global outlook, global attitude (openness and inclusiveness) and understanding of globalisation.

❖ The outcomes of students' change of perception have profound impact on their career plan, lifestyle, identity and social responsibility.

❖ Unlike Western sojourners who realise social justice against post-colonialism, capitalism, inequality and power imbalance, Chinese students emphasised the value of openness and inclusiveness as the global attitude, which respects and appreciate diversity and social participation through protesting and freedom of speech.

Findings 4: Development of global skills

❖ The improved global skills consist of six categories to interculture communication (English language skill and culture awareness), critical thinking, personal growth (adoptability, independence and confidence), academic skills, social engagement (networking and participation), and digital literacy (use of social media and online learning).

❖ However, some students' skill development was limited by their lack of opportunity, capability and interest in expanding social network and making effort in active participation.

Conclusion

❖ Study abroad can provide international students with a platform to foster global citizenship, through which students are provided with opportunities to understand GC in different perspectives and improve global skills.

❖ Through the journey of study abroad, the students have transformed into a type of "Chinese Global Citizen" with not only enhanced employability, but also the cosmopolitan value of inclusiveness and the power of critical reflection on themselves in the globalised world.

❖ Such transformation is achieved by the students' effort of proactive participation in various form of academic and social activities provided by their universities and local communities in the UK.

Personalized & Dynamic:

Life Experiences Tailor How Young People Engage Locally and Globally

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Background

Much of literature on global citizenship education (GCE):
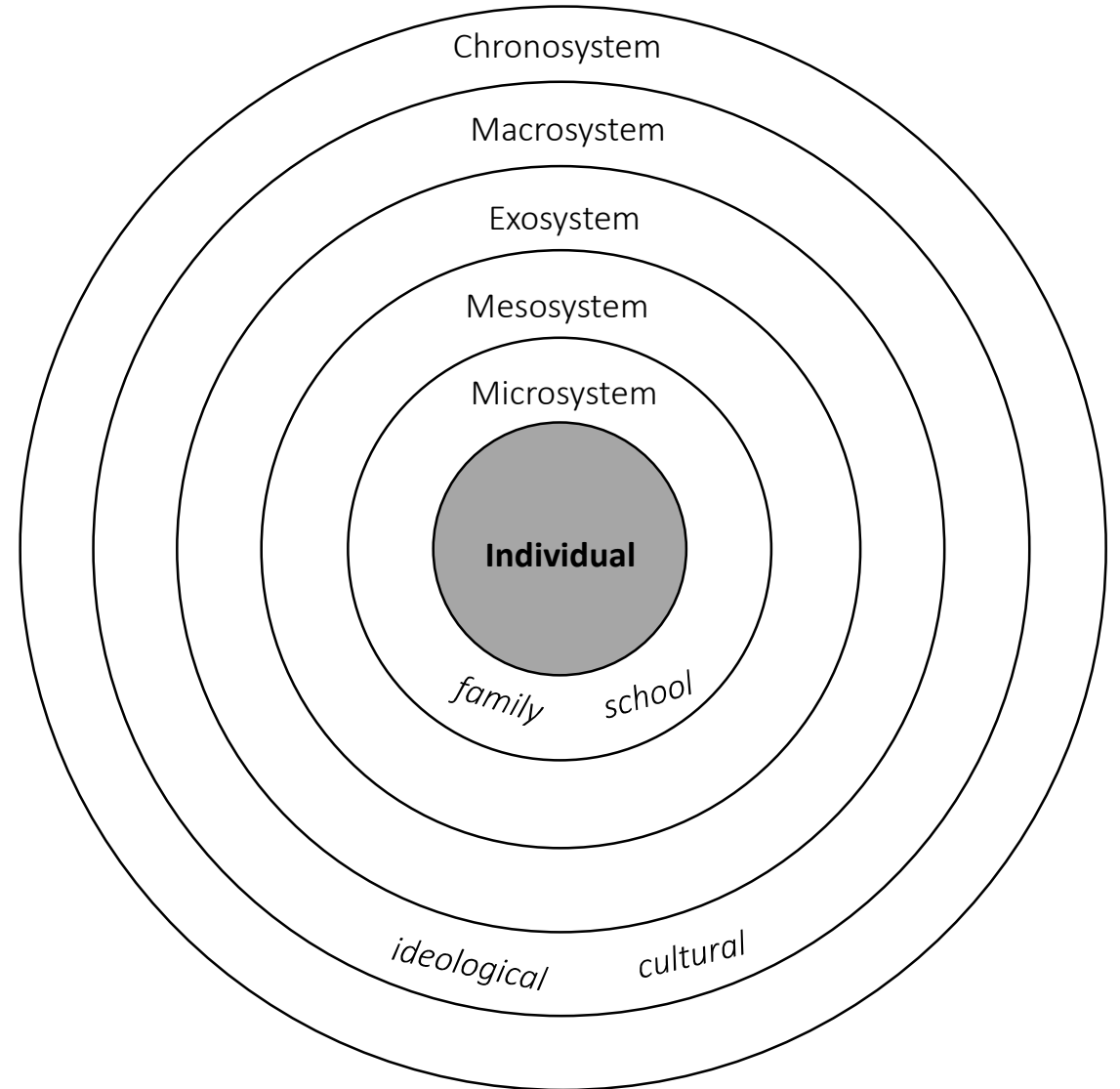
- Conceptual
- Focused on Assessment

Bourn & Brown (2011, pp.6-7)

- Little focus on "processes of learning and engagement from young people's perspectives"
- Most research has been written on "what it *should* mean for young people to engage with global issues."
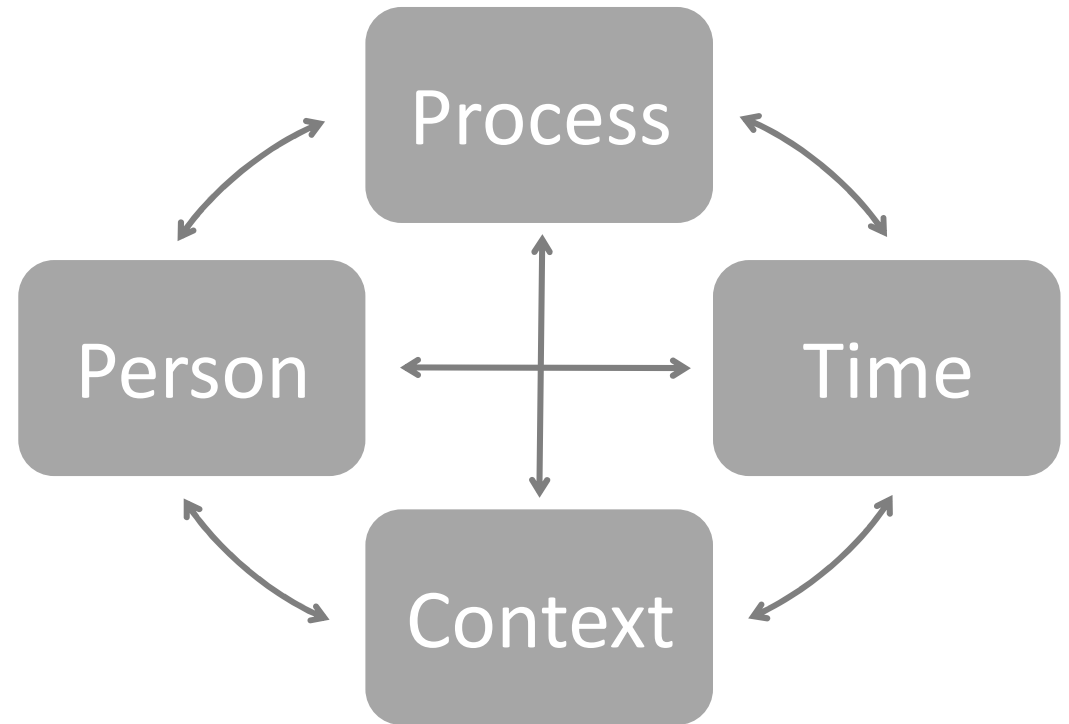
Background

Urie Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. Based on "The Bioecological Model of Human Development" by U. Bronfenbrenner and P. Morris, 2006, Hoboken, USA: Wiley.

Background

Urie Bronfenbrenner

Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model. Based on "The Bioecological Model of Human Development" by U. Bronfenbrenner and P. Morris, 2006, Hoboken, USA: Wiley.

Background

UNESCO (2015)

Core Conceptual Dimensions of Global Citizenship Education

Cognitive — *knowledge*

Socio-emotional — *values & attitudes*

Behavioural — *action*

Research Question

What are some of the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) elements that influence one's socio-emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with issues happening at the local, national, and/or global spheres?
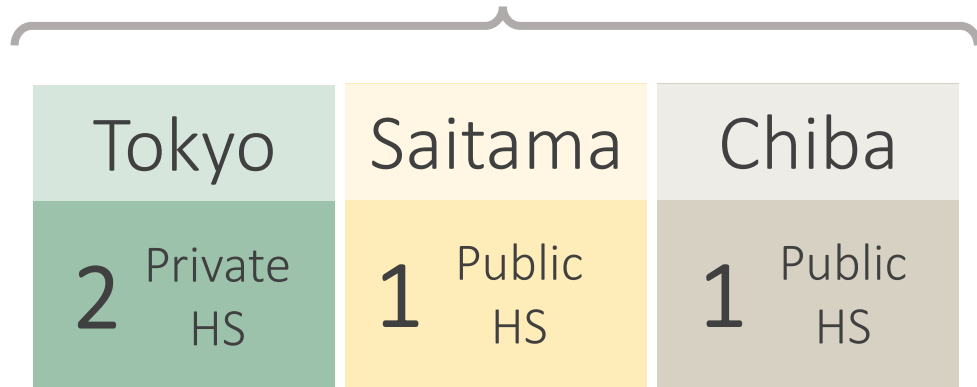
Research Design & Methodology

Phase 1	Phase 2

22 students $\longrightarrow$ 6 students

Tokyo	Saitama	Chiba
2 Private HS	1 Public HS	1 Public HS

August 2014 - February 2015

More structured interviews

May – September 2018

Less structured interviews
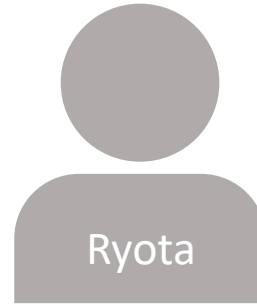
Findings

Involved in Volunteer Activities	Involved in Volunteer Activities: **Building a library for an orphanage in Cambodia**

Shota

Takumi

"I learned a lot from that class and was influenced a lot from it, and above all, [the teacher] had an understanding [about poverty issues], and we learned a lot about it using English, and I became really interested in poverty issues."

"I was deeply impressed with his words, especially since if I also did not have the money, or such a system to receive scholarship did not exist, I would not have been able to receive an education. I think education is something that can be opened for everyone, and how that person had the fervor to provide education for those in poverty, I just felt the same way, and we were like let's do something together!"

Findings

Ryota

Volunteer activities as a means to gain various experiences
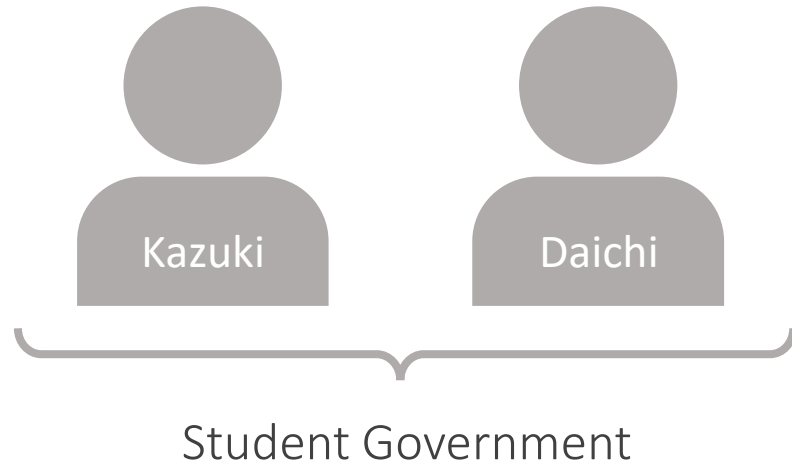
Phase 1
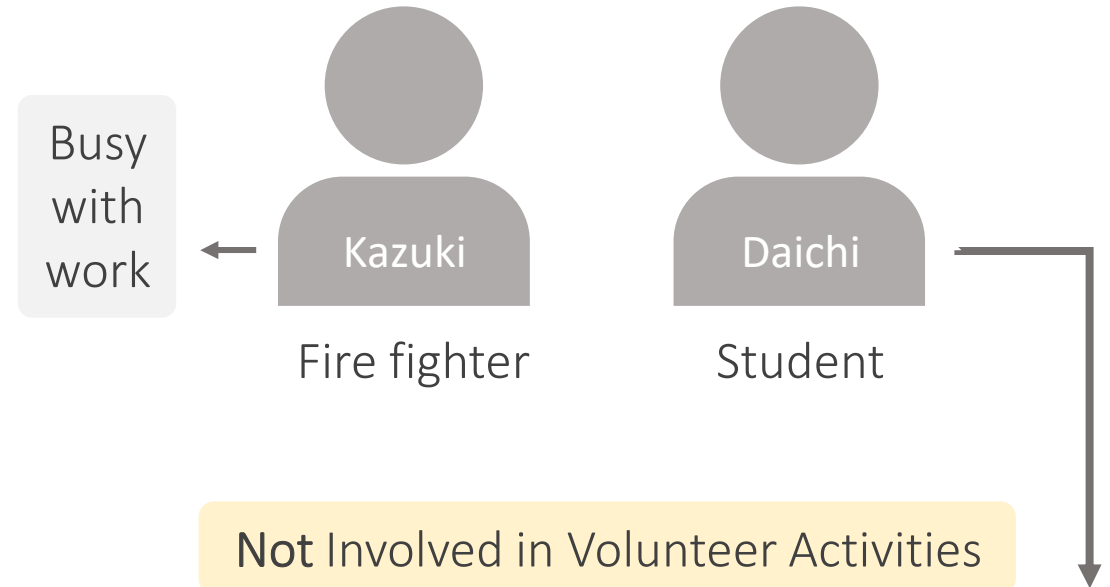
Phase 2

Involved in Volunteer Activities

Shota

Takumi

Findings

Kazuki   Daichi

Student Government

Involved in Volunteer Activities

Busy with work ← Kazuki   Daichi

Fire fighter   Student

Not Involved in Volunteer Activities

"Well, after getting into college, there were clubs [that did volunteer activities], but rather than those, well, since I've experienced that in high school, I wanted to do as I please and do something fun."

Findings

Misaki

Perceptional Change

Phase 1	Phase 2

Not Involved in Volunteer Activities

"I think I have changed [since high school]. Hmm... what has changed... I think I've widened my perspectives with regards to my career as well as I think since my interests have also grown. I also think because I have been experiencing many things. When I was a high school student, I wasn't able to take action, although there are still many things that I cannot act upon. But [in high school] I had many friends who were proactive and studied abroad or visited overseas for a week during summer break, but I wanted to but could not make that happen. As a college student, I visited the United States, Vietnam, and Taiwan, and I thought, rather than not going and trying to think of things through imagination, it is better to just go and experience it. That way, as I have, I think one's perspectives can change and become wider."

Key Themes

Varying Reasons or Life Experiences Encourage Involvement

Different Motives for Engagement

Changes in the Level of Engagement Over Time

Changes in Perception Over Time

Conclusion

Young people could engage in various activities in

personalized and **dynamic** ways.

What is assumed as best practices for GCE may not be equally effective for all learners, and therefore, it is important to consider not only general cultural contexts but also individual learner context when implementing GCE.

Thank you!

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