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1. Introduction

Global citizenship is the umbrella term for social, political, environmental, and economic actions of globally minded individuals and communities on a worldwide scale. While this idea is widely promoted in the mainstream curriculum in the Western world, it is not so well-discussed in other parts of the world, such as Macau, a Special Administrative Region of China, due to the city's labyrinthine socio-political context.

According to the official statistics,³ there are 77 schools in Macau during the 2021/2022 academic year, of which only 10 of them are public and the rest of the private schools are founded by different religious institutions and corporate groups. Moreover, the Government 'encourages schools to develop their own characteristics and style in terms of mission, curriculum development and teaching mode.' Due to this distinctive formation of the education system, with the addition of the official support of a diverse focus, despite the fact that the Government established the Requirements of Basic Academic Attainments in 2015/2016 to regulate the fundamental knowledge acquired, it is believed that civic education in the local curriculum is unable to cover global citizenship evenly and universally.

Founded in 2020, the Macau Model United Nations Promotion Association (MMUNPA) aims to promote international affairs to secondary students and nurture their global vision and discernment to criticize the abundance of contemporarily encountered issues. We established the Student Ambassador Program in 2021 as our flagship event to further advocate our missions to all local secondary students. The Program consists of three phases: (1) receives lectures on various international affairs topics and conducts event planning trainings; (2) Organizes small-scale events that require skills learned in Phase 1; (3) leads region-wide Model United Nations Conference and in-school promotional talks that derived solely from students' ideas and gained support from a government official, SDSN offices, as well as university professors. Each Student Ambassador (thereafter the participant) is assigned to a mentor (MMUNPA co-founder) to follow up their progress and support their planning for further studies throughout the year-long process. In our second cohort (2022–2023), we recruited 22 secondary students across seven local schools. The authors, as well as the Program initiators, have the following questions towards the end of the second cohort: What is the difference in terms of Global Citizenship Scale (GCS) before and after the Program? How does the Program enhance accessibility of citizenship education in Macau?

This research employs a mixed-method approach. The participants are asked to complete the GCS survey twice before and after the Program in September 2022 and June 2023. Valid responses (N=20) are presented via descriptive analysis. All participants with an increase in the statistical result (N=11, one declined) and half of the participants with a decrease in the

¹ All authors have contributed equally.

² "Global citizenship."

³ "Education."

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "General Guides for the Requirements of Basic Academic Attainments at Infant Education Level."

GCS result (N=4) are also invited for 30-minute-long interviews (N=14) conducted in Cantonese. Interviewers are not involved in executing the Program and all interviews are informed consent and recorded with consent. The data undergoes inductive coding in its first round and deductive coding in its second round. Four themes and twelve sub-themes are generated via thematic analysis.

Albeit there have been sufficient studies on the correlation between global citizenship and local curriculum across different continents and even in nearby regions such as Hong Kong, the situation and effectiveness in Macau remain overlooked. The MMUNPA as the first domestic Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to promote the Model United Nations along with SDGs, serves as an extension of the Government to complement the existing civic education model. The effectiveness of the Student Ambassador Program is worth being evaluated and discussed.

2. Literature review

2.1. Identity as global citizen and global citizenship education

The term "citizen," which is rooted from the ancient Greek and Latin culture, contains the concept that people inhabit a city or community that enjoys a degree of rights and privileges of their own identity in the community. Yet in this globalized world, citizenship has expanded from local community or state nation to the whole world, the term "global citizenship" has become a more constructive identity in comparison to race, nationality, religious and sex identification. Reysen defines global citizenship as "global awareness, caring, embracing cultural diversity, promoting social justice and sustainability, and a sense of responsibility to act." While global citizenship involves the relationship of individuals and others, it is necessary to review how education may construct and cultivate global citizenship.

The idea of global citizenship is mainly derived from the process of globalization. As suggested, there is a growing recognition acknowledging the need for civic education in addressing the continuing injustice and inequalities in the world. In 1993, The World Conference on Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration highlighted the importance of human rights education, training, as well as public information in fostering better tolerance and peace among communities. Consequently, The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed a ten-year aim for Human Rights Education, which targeted governments in establishing programs and actions in the field.

The fast-changing development in globalization urges active response from the field of education and awaits global citizens with responsibility, capability, and global vision for public policy. Throughout the years, scholars had proposed claims and criteria for global citizenship. Dower asserts that global citizenship should be comprised of a normative claim about how humans should act, an existential claim about what is the case in the world and an aspirational claim about the future, while Oxfam suggested that global citizen should be someone who is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their role as a world citizen, respects and values diversity, has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically,

⁶ For example, Lo et al., "Cross-Cultural Validation of the Global Citizenship Scale for Measuring Impacts of International Service-Learning."

⁷ Reysen, Larey, and Katzarska-Miller, "College Course Curriculum and Global Citizenship," 27.

⁸ Starkey and Osler, "Study on the Advances in Civic Education in Education Systems: Good Practices in Industrialized Countries."

⁹ "United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004)."

¹⁰ Starkey and Osler, "Study on the Advances in Civic Education in Education Systems: Good Practices in Industrialized Countries." 9

¹¹ Dower, An Introduction to Global Citizenship, 5

socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally, is outraged by social injustice, and takes responsibility for their actions. 12

As global citizenship has become a more and more important role in the context of a globalized world, more NGOs have advocated the necessity of Global citizenship education to empower students to build a more peaceful and inclusive society. UNESCO proposed the ANENDA 2030, suggesting a global citizenship education to be part of school curricula in order to get students to prepared for global challenges. ¹³ Therefore, it is necessary to navigate how different governments handle civic education and how it is reflected in its teaching materials.

2.2. Civic education in Macau

As a society which was once governed by Portugal and has been maintained as a Special Administrative Region of China, Macau has shared a complicated vision both nationally and internationally. This feature may also shape the framework and implication of the curriculum.

The development of civic education in Macau can be traced back to its colonial era. In 1990, the Macau Education Bureau (the present-day Education and Youth Development Bureau) launched the first civil education personnel training program, from which most of the graduates went down to work in schools, labor unions, social organizations, and government divisions. ¹⁴ After Macau's return to Chinese sovereignty, the reformed Education and Youth Development Bureau announced "The Requirements of Basic Moral and Civil Education Attainments" in 2009, signaling the standardization of civic education in Macau. ¹⁵ The Requirement comprises four spheres of studies, including "Self-development," "Community life," "Social engagement" and "Global vision."

In 2015, the Macau SAR announced "The Requirements of Basic Academic Attainment," which appears as the guideline for local schools and teacher groups to practice and design curriculum in every subject. ¹⁶ The intention was to provide a comprehensive academic structure to assure the quality of education and the development of students at all levels. Reading from the requirement, the field "Moral and civic education" highlighted that global connection is fundamental for high school students, from which "the ability to understand the impact to globalization," "capable of accessing the functions and limitations of the international organization," "ability to comment and advice international conflicts" are some of the ten indicators of the requirement.¹⁷

While civic education was considered as essential, Leung and Print (2002) pointed out that the current curriculum of civic education may serve more as moral and nationalist education than the nurture of critical thinking and civic awareness. ¹⁸ Therefore, it is still necessary to investigate the effectiveness of global civic education from multiple perspectives.

In 2021, the Macau SAR initiated the "Macau Youth Policy (2021–2030)," indicating a more refined and specific policy design for the next generation of the society. The scheme covered 11 areas ranging from "Education and Training," "Cultural, Leisure, Recreational and Sports Activities," "Civic Duties and Social Participation" to "Home country feelings," from which the

¹² Davies, "Global Citizenship: Abstraction or Framework for Action?"

¹³ "Global Citizenship Education."

¹⁴ Yao, "Aomen Gongmin Jiaoyu Qianxi," 118

¹⁵ Fu, "Aomen Gongmin Jiaoyu De Queshi Ji Pinde Yu Gongmin Jiaokeshu De Huiying", 81

¹⁶ "Curriculum and Teaching Resources | DSEDJ."

¹⁷ "Despacho do Secretário para os Assuntos Sociais e Cultura n.º 55/2017."

¹⁸ Leung and Print, *Nationalistic Education as the Focus for Civics and Citizenship Education: The Case of Hong Kong.*

idea of "Global vision" lies under the category of "Education and Training," depending on the number of students who goes to exchange outside Macau.¹⁹

2.3. NGOs in education

The United Nations defines NGOs as "not-for-profit, voluntary citizens" groups that are run on local, national or even international level in responding to certain issues that propose social benefits. NGOs can be interpreted and performed in a wide range of forms, and they often encourage civil participation and political awareness.²⁰

The role of NGOs as an extension of government services has been studied by many scholars. ²¹ In some inefficient and ineffective governments, NGOs may also serve as complementing bodies that foster social development through the means of education. ²²

Concerning NGOs' education value, it is believed that NGOs can also provide support in addition to school curricula for the general public. By providing educational programs, supporting classes, training for teachers, as well as infrastructure support, NGOs appear to be a stronger and more well-rounded unit that supplements government-initiated education.²³

Rose²⁴ demonstrated how NGOs can support improving the quality of government provision through education programs and investigated how NGOs may boost educational opportunities for children who are excluded from schooling due to social conflicts and disability. Empirical evidence concluded that education provided by NGOs is widely regarded as the second-best alternative in comparison to government education.

3. Results

3.1. Quantitative results

The GCS survey is conducted twice at the beginning and towards the end of the year-long Program in September 2022 and June 2023. The 20 valid responses comprised 2 males and 18 females across 7 local schools. The age of the participants ranged from 14 to 18 years old, with an average age of 16.5 years. The majority of participants are in their Grade 11 (n=9), Grade 12 (n=6), and Grade 10 (n=4). Only one participant is in her Grade 9 (see TABLE 1).

TABLE 1. Quantitative results

| | Age | Grade | Pre-Program test (2022/09) | Post-Program test (2023/06) | Differences |
|---------|------|---------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Average | 16.5 | Form 5/ Grade 11 | 152.85 | 156.90 | 4.05 |
| Median | 17 | Form 5/ Grade 11 | 154.00 | 156.00 | 2.00 |
| Range | 5 | 4 | 69.00 | 69.00 | 0 |

According to the statistics, the average sum and median were 152.85 and 154.00 respectively in September 2022 when the Program just began and 156.90 and 156.00 respectively in June 2023 towards the end of it. There is an increase of 4.05 points on average and 2.00 points on

²³ Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond, and Wolf, *Evolving Partnerships: The Role of NGOs in Basic Education in Africa*.

¹⁹ "Indicators of Macao."

²⁰ Carr and Outhwaite, "The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Combating Corruption: Theory and Practice."

²¹ Symaco, "Education and NGOs", 22

²² Ihid

²⁴ Rose, NGO Provision of Basic Education: Alternative or Complementary Service Delivery to Support Access to the Excluded?

the median, thus reflecting a positively skewed distribution in both cases and a narrowed gap in the understanding of knowledge.

The most significant negative difference is -33 points. The most significant positive difference is 63 points, almost double that of his counterpart. The range remains stagnant throughout the year.

With 9 negative values and 11 positive values, the quantitative result generally suggests that there is a positive correlation between the Program and the empowerment of being a global citizen.

3.2. Qualitative results

The study included 12 female and 2 male participants across 6 local schools. The age of the participants ranged from 15 to 18 years old, with an average age of 16.9 years. Most of the participants were in Form 5/Grade 11 (5) and Form 6/Grade 12 (5), followed by Form 4/Grade 10 (3). The changes in Global Citizenship Scale (GCS) varied, with 10 participants reporting an increase in GCS and 4 reporting a decrease in GCS (see TABLE 2).

TABLE 2. Profile of participants

| No. | Age | Grade | Changes in GCS |
|-----|-----|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 17 | Form 6/ Grade 12 | Increased |
| 2 | 16 | Form 4/ Grade 10 | Decreased |
| 3 | 17 | Form 5/ Grade 11 | Increased |
| 4 | 15 | Form 3/ Grade 9 | Increased |
| 5 | 16 | Form 5/ Grade 11 | Increased |
| 6 | 16 | Form 5/ Grade 11 | Increased |
| 7 | 17 | Form 6/ Grade 12 | Increased |
| 8 | 17 | Form 5/ Grade 11 | Decreased |
| 9 | 15 | Form 4/ Grade 10 | Increased |
| 10 | 17 | Form 6/ Grade 12 | Increased |
| 11 | 17 | Form 6/ Grade 12 | Increased |
| 12 | 17 | Form 5/ Grade 11 | Decreased |
| 13 | 16 | Form 4/ Grade 10 | Decreased |
| 14 | 18 | Form 6/ Grade 12 | Increased |

Underwent 2 cycles of coding, with the first-round analysis utilizing inductive coding, and second-round analysis utilizing deductive coding, 4 themes and 12 sub themes were generated as follows.

3.2.1. Perspective shift towards global citizenship

After the yearlong Program, participants revealed that they understand the importance of being a global citizen, especially how it is needed in Macau. Some reported that they may not be aware of such importance prior to taking part in this Program, or probably never thought of being one. But now, they strive to pay continual efforts to be a global citizen, such as proactively researching on global affairs to fulfill the responsibility, and most importantly, they would like to take the lead to influence their peers to become global citizens. From focusing on local issues, their perspective has shifted to exploring more on global problems and trying to take actions to help people from the other side of the world.

"Now I understand the importance of being a global citizen, but before I participated in this Program, I didn't think it was that important. However, through this Program, I have been given many research tasks that have sparked my curiosity and allowed me to gain more knowledge about events happening in different parts of the world." (#11)

"Now, I am on the path to becoming a global citizen, and this Program has brought me closer to that goal. Before, I paid little attention to international affairs and felt that the world was far away. However, now I feel closer to it." (#13)

Through the opportunities provided in the Program, it sparked participants' curiosity towards the greater world, and gave them a hands-on experience that they are actually part of the world, thus paving a way for them on the journey to being a global citizen.

"The responsibility of being a global citizen is to not turn a blind eye to problems but to make efforts to take action to solve them. Currently, I choose to learn more about what is happening in the world, try to donate or encourage my peers to learn about current events. I will strive to do what I can in this environment that may be with constraints." (#2)

This 16-year-old girl has transformed her perspective towards global citizens from a more passive attitude to a more proactive one that seeks solutions for global problems.

3.2.2. <u>Inclusive and diverse environment</u>

Participants acknowledged the inclusive and diverse environment created for the Program that allows them to meet people with different backgrounds and touch on a variety of topics. They reported being willing and confident to collaborate with people from different disciplines, socioeconomic status and ethnicities with the interpersonal skills honed in the Program. They tend to show acceptance and understanding towards differences.

"I think having students from different schools and backgrounds in this Program is great because it allows me to step out of my comfort zone and break free from my usual social circle. In the past, I mostly interacted with people from my own school, but now I can communicate with people from different backgrounds, and it has given me a broader perspective on the world. The mentors from different backgrounds have been very inspiring, providing us with diverse insights. Hearing the voices of people from different backgrounds and places has allowed me to see things from multiple perspectives, not just from a Macau citizen point of view but also from a global citizen's perspective." (#9)

"One of the reasons I joined this Program was to meet students from different schools. The Program has a special setup that allows me to meet people from different backgrounds, giving me insight into my own strengths and weaknesses and helping me determine my direction for further studies." (#2)

The diverse environment has led our participants out of their comfort zone and view issues from different perspectives then reflect on their own with the change of attitude. Such an environment has enabled them to move forward to being a global citizen thus fulfilling their responsibilities for the world.

3.2.3. Exposure to global affairs and citizenship education

Through events, conferences, and talks, including organizing and participating, our participants are provided exposure to global affairs and citizenship education, which they reported not being able to obtain through mainstream education. Most of them described the Program as exceptional compared to other traditional projects in Macau given its uniqueness to provide global citizenship education and the high accessibility to access, being able to reach different schools in Macau.

"Regularly attending association lectures has been very helpful to me, especially for topics I had not previously encountered, such as the recent events on death education and Macau's domestic violence law... I am always happy to share this great content with my classmates." (#7)

"My first exposure to Model United Nations was through participating in this Program. It gave me a broader perspective and introduced me to knowledge that I had never encountered before." (#11)

Some participants reported the Program is the first channel for them to be exposed to certain international topics. With such fruitful experience, they are willing to talk about global affairs with their peers in daily conversations too.

3.2.4. Experiential learning

The Program has adopted the experiential learning theory in design and implementation. Participants revealed how the autonomous environment has boosted their willingness to join and their sense of belonging towards the team. Along with more reflection sessions, these features have empowered their self-efficacy. Some also reported the insights reflected from their learning process and exposure to new issues has guided them to a clearer picture for their further studies and career planning.

"Planning activities in this Program has a great deal of autonomy, which makes me more courageous in expressing my opinions. I feel that my efforts are valued here. I have a lot of space to share my ideas." (#1)

"I am more confident speaking in front of others with autonomy given. Through various activities and planning, I have become more courageous in proposing solutions. Additionally, with the guidance of mentors, I have discovered some negative traits within myself. Gradually, I have learned to value teamwork more and seek the opinions of others before proceeding with work." (#9)

4. Discussion

Based on both the quantitative and qualitative results, this research generally suggests a positive correlation between students' participation in the Program and their knowledge and willingness to promote SDGs as global citizens in their community.

While this research acknowledges that the change in GCS before and after the participation of the Program may not be dramatic as shown in the quantitative results, the interview content suggests a positive awareness of what the Program aspires to foster. Taking Macau's unique and complicated socio-political context into consideration, although the increase in the quantitative result might not be significant, it is important to stress that participants with a drop in the GCS points shared a positive comment towards the Program. This research suggests that the US-developed GCS survey is not universal to all cases 25 due to cross-cultural differences and thus might not be able to fully reflect the scenario. This section intends to discuss the significance of the Program from three aspects:

4.1. <u>Complementing to the existing civic education model</u>

Since Macau is a corporatist society and that the number of private schools exceeds public schools, the existing civic education model is developed and promoted based on social needs. Although the Macau Government has launched the Requirements of Basic Academic Attainments to frame the fundamental knowledge local students should acquire in different subjects, it is impossible to include every aspect in the mainstream education.

²⁵ Lo et al., "Cross-Cultural Validation of the Global Citizenship Scale for Measuring Impacts of International Service-Learning," 26.

In light of this, our NGO serves as an extension of the government²⁶ and introduced the first Student Ambassador Program in 2021, in hopes of shedding new light on the existing curriculum and providing alternative insight on how to become a global citizen. As revealed in **3.2.1**, participants claim that the Program has raised their awareness of the importance and the action that has to be taken to become global citizens. The local education loop is gradually closing.

4.2. <u>Abolishing education elitism</u>

No matter if it is the Model UN activity or the awareness to become a global citizen, they are mostly reserved for the privileged especially when first emerged. The Program abolishes education elitism by providing a platform for all local teenagers regardless of social background.

In Macau, schools might focus on different aspects of civic education on top of the government-regulated curriculum, depending on the number of resources they have. In the process of conducting interviews, a number of participants reported that they have never encountered topics such as global citizenship and certain international affairs in their school curriculum (see 3.2.3). While certain elite schools provide various extracurricular activities and promote global values and ideas starting from an early stage of education, the silent majority are left behind until they enter society and realize (although some might never realize) the gap between them and the ones who received elite education.

The Program, as stated in both the quantitative and qualitative results, welcomes a number of young leaders across different secondary schools regardless of background. Ideas such as the SDGs and global issues are introduced and discussed throughout the year-long process, high threshold events are now accessible. By hosting regular lectures and training, the program wants to ensure that, as the core value of SDGs says — leaves no one behind.

4.3. <u>Creating an inclusive environment</u>

As the Program gathers people from diverse backgrounds across different schools, we managed to provide an inclusive environment (SDG 4) for the younger generation to explore citizenship education.

Apart from meeting similar-aged people from different schools, the Program also provides an experiential learning mechanism (see 3.2.2 and 3.2.4). Through enhancing the contact between people of different age groups, social backgrounds, and ethnic origins, participants also reported that they are more confident to talk to, or even to collaborate with others that are 'different' from them. Since neither the Macau Government nor the majority of local NGOs are providing similar training and promoting related knowledge, the Program stands out as an extension of the existing patriotism-oriented curriculum.

With acceptance and a mutual understanding of the importance of having an inclusive environment, the Program would, ultimately, pave a way for youths in Macau to work on achieving the SDGs as individuals. The next generation is by no means gearwheels of a society but the foundation of it.

However, despite all these fruitful outturns, there are a number of questions that the authors might wish to consider: How can we spread our ideas and visions to a wider public while ensuring to deliver the current depth to each participant? As an NGO without funding, where is the balance between the participants' experience and the initiators' workload? At the turn of the second and the third Ambassador Program, these are some of the issues that the authors want to resolve.

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²⁶ Rose, NGO Provision of Basic Education: Alternative or Complementary Service Delivery to Support Access to the Excluded?

5. Implications and Future directions

Our research aims to explore the possibility of extra-curricular civic education in the context of the rise of global civic education. While "The Requirements of Basic Academic Attainment," despite its inapplicability to all local schools due to historical background, it promotes 10 indicators for students in attaining global vision. The research tries to connect the idea of global civic education with these indexes and analyzes the possibility of extra-curricular civic education in Macau.

By examining the Student Ambassador Program, which has been practiced for over two years, this paper suggests that the Program created an inclusive environment that abolished the barrier and education privilege that were generated due to the variety of school backgrounds and the discrepancy of education resources, which were largely shaped by the corporatism in Macau society. Among all the studies that focus on the relationship between NGOs and education in Macau, the study may be regarded as an innovative approach in this field, therefore, there are two prominent implications that await further study:

Macau students performed outstandingly for many consecutive years in the Program for International Studies Assessment (PISA), implying a generally positive environment for education. However, most of the existing studies did not take Macau's cooperative society into account and investigated students' discrepancies in academic performance that were influenced by educational resources. The article argues that the influence of NGOs may be crucial in determining education equality, especially on the role the NGOs are playing to promote global citizenship education.

It is also suggested that the inclusive environment in NGOs may play an indispensable role in influencing students' learning experience, especially in shaping their global vision. Macau's private schools have always outnumbered public schools and the autonomy of dealing with assigned teaching material also varies, it is worthy to have future research which further navigates the relationship between an inclusive environment and learning experience provided by NGOs in Macau.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the impact of an NGO-led Student Ambassador Program on promoting global citizenship and SDGs among the youth of Macau. The results show a positive correlation between participation in the extracurricular program and students' knowledge and willingness to promote SDGs within their communities, despite the Program's unique sociopolitical context and the challenges of adapting a non-locally developed survey to assess its impact.

The Program provides an alternative perspective for becoming a global citizen that enriches the existing civic education model. It also disrupts education elitism by extending the opportunity to all local teenagers, regardless of their social background, and fosters an inclusive environment for experiential learning and interaction between diverse groups.

These findings have broader implications for the role of NGOs in education, especially in societies like Macau, where private schools outnumber public ones, and NGOs play an essential role. The Program's potential to level the playing field and foster education equality is significant, as is its role in shaping students' global vision. However, challenges remain, such as balancing program depth with wider reach and operating without funding.

Looking ahead, future research and practice should focus on finding ways to spread the Program's vision more broadly without diluting its impact and developing sustainable models for operation. Additionally, further investigation is necessary to explore the role of NGOs in promoting education equality and the relationship between inclusive environments and students' learning experiences.

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