

# Students' self-perception of their Sustainability Consciousness resulted from Hong Kong's Liberal Education curricula

## Rationale

Analyzing influences of Hong Kong liberal education curricula on secondary school graduates, enrolled in public tertiary institutions, with a specific focus on students' self-perceived sustainability consciousness is crucially important to (a) supporting the Edb strategic goal of creating a continues structure of Hong Kong liberal education (b) advancing implementation of liberal education from secondary to tertiary levels of Hong Kong's education system and evolution of sustainability education as its core element.

## Background

Stemming from a long tradition of liberal education in Hong Kong, General Education(GE) courses and programs together with the recently implemented compulsory 2009 New Senior Secondary Liberal Studies (NSS LS) curriculum, represent a continues and sustainable structure of liberal education in the city. Although thousands of young Hongkongers participate in liberal studies courses and programs through secondary and tertiary levels of education, the influence of this structure of liberal education on their mindset remains unclear.

## Objectives

Develop expertise and Hong Kong liberal education structure and its transformative impacts through :

- Examining the self-perceptions of Hong Kong secondary school graduates enrolled in General Education programs in tertiary institutions about their sustainability consciousness resulting from the continues liberal education curricula;
- Providing first-hand data about a sustainability module of the curricula and its ability to influence students' values, beliefs, and goals;
- Identifying strategies to improve teaching for transformative learning in GE & NSS LS courses.

### Theoretical grounding

The study relies on the use of two theoretical perspectives, based on Bateson's (1973) transformative learning model and Harvey's (1976) conceptualizations of global awareness [3,4].

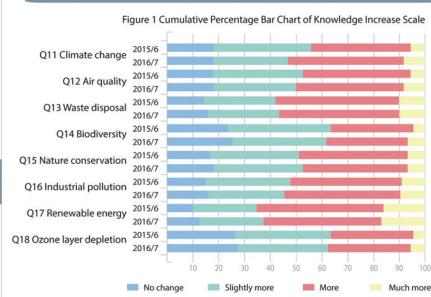


### Methodological scope

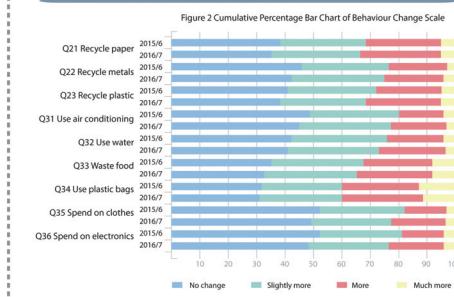
Within a mix-method research design framework, the researchers conducted ~ 5000 questionnaires and collected 989 reflective narratives of first year students of eight universities in Hong Kong, who were enrolled in General Education courses.

## Quantitative results

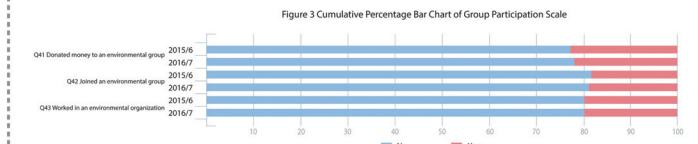
### Sustainability consciousness of Hong Kong students



Quantitative results revealed an increase in the self-perceived knowledge and behavioral aspects of the sustainability consciousness of Hong Kong students. These might be attributed to their immersion in compulsory sustainability education modules within liberal studies programs in secondary through tertiary education. At the same time, students' self-reported engagement in sustainability-related civic, campus, or action groups remained low.



Qualitative analysis of students' reflective narratives revealed that beneath these visible or self-declared behavior and knowledge changes, lies imaginative, future oriented, and critical approaches to describing and analyzing their views on their identities, nature, and their notion of social, environmental, and economic sustainability.



## Qualitative results



## Discussion & Conclusions

01

Added to the discussion on transformative learning based on Bateson's (1973) model that emphasize the importance of one's ability to imagine, articulate, and enact principles of ideal cohabitation rather than to display sustainability action as the end-result of sustainability education.

03

Stressed an important role that imagination plays in a process of fostering students' sustainability-consciousness. This challenged simplistic assumptions about a linear knowledge-attitude-behavior model and the ways students shape their intentions towards sustainability-related actions.

05

Suggested that driving ideas about human-nature relationships within the localized sustainability discourse are grounded in Confucianism. Ontologies (hierarchy of beings) originated from the localized Confucian tradition shape local students' sustainability-related perceptions and worldviews that might differ from those of their western peer. This force shapes its own anthropocentric and cosmoanthropic foundation to the regional sustainability discourse [7].

02

Echoed work on "eschatological imagination" [5] when students were able to connect sustainability with emotional, relational and ethical aspects of their own experiences that triggered their engagement with complex questions about identity, society, and nature. Students gradually and meaningfully re-discovered and re-constructed their own nature-related worldviews, setting a foundation for the construction and practical manifestations of their sustainability-related realities.

04

Envisioned value of social Imaginary that gives students a stronger sense of an interconnected and shared life, contributes to social identity through self-realizations, understandings, and self-constructions of common expectations related to one's future. This triggers a society where each individual becomes an "immediate to the whole" [6].

06

Pointed students' strong cultural biases yet openness to alternatives and commitment to the better future that underscores contextuality as an important condition for the formation of sustainability consciousness.

## References

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