

**Reasons for Hong Kong Parents Sending
Their Children Abroad for Secondary Education**

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Certificate of Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of candidate

Date

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Abstract

The Hong Kong Government provides free secondary education for eligible local children. However, thousands of Hong Kong parents send their children abroad for their secondary education each year, despite the cost, which often includes expensive tuition fees and boarding fees. This study seeks to discover why parents make this choice. It uses a qualitative approach to explore their reasons. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with 15 individual parents, who expressed dissatisfaction with Hong Kong's educational policies, particularly those affecting academic structures and curriculum, medium of instruction, class size and provision of university places. They also expressed some concerns about their own ability to support their children's development.

The research findings indicated three themes that encompass the reasons for these parents' decision to send their children abroad for secondary education. The first theme was entitled 'Formal Learning Environment', and included subthemes such as Arts Subject Curriculum, English-medium Education, Small-class Teaching and Balanced Education. The second theme was entitled 'Informal Learning Environment', and included subthemes such as Self-care Skills and Independence, Peers and Social Skills and Exposure to Different Cultures. The third theme was entitled 'The Future of Their Children', and included subthemes such as Admission to Universities and Emigration.

The findings show that Hong Kong parents who can afford to send their children abroad for education are likely to belong to the middle class. The findings demonstrate the relationship between education and the social position of this middle class. The parents interviewed wanted their children to sustain their class advantage, and thus mobilised their economic resources to secure their children's educational success, using education as a positional good. The parents interviewed also appreciated overseas boarding schools because the extra-curricular activities and active social life these schools provide can nurture their children's character and social and emotional wellbeing.

This research identifies nine reasons that contribute to knowledge in the field of education and open up the possibility of future studies. These reasons could inform policy-makers and prompt further research into 'global school choice'.