

The differences between students' fixed and growth mindsets: a case of study tour between Hong Kong and Canada

Students' fixed
and growth
mindsets

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Abstract

Purpose – The paper aims to address the gap in the literature related to students' mindsets and learning activities through investigation of the differences in students' expectations of, feelings towards, and perceptions of an overseas study tour based on their mindset. The study provides an in-depth analysis of students with different mindsets and proposes the use of overseas tours and intercultural learning to foster students' growth mindset.

Design/methodology/approach – An overseas study tour hosted by a self-financing tertiary institution in Hong Kong was selected for investigation. 13 sub-degree students participated in the study tour during the summer term in 2018. Two types of primary data – quantitative (i.e., a questionnaire survey) and qualitative (i.e., in-depth interviews) – of fixed mindset and growth mindset students were collected for analysis.

Findings – The findings indicate differences in students' expectations of, feelings towards, and perceptions of an overseas study tour depending on whether they demonstrate a fixed or growth mindset. The growth mindset students had more and higher expectations of the study tour, all of which were related to personal growth and development. The fixed mindset students did not have as much of a desire for personal development and their expectations were easily met. Both growth and fixed mindset students had positive feelings and perceptions of the tour.

Originality/value – Research on the application value of overseas study tours in helping students from self-financing tertiary institutions develop a growth mindset is scarce, and thus warrants further investigation.

Keywords Mindset, Study tour, Expectation, Perception

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Students differ significantly in terms of their abilities, intelligence, talents, and capabilities. Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck (2006) proposed two major types of student mindset: fixed and growth. Students' mindset reflects their perceptions of learning, engagement in learning, learning potential, and future study habits (Dweck, 2006; Chan *et al.*, 2020). These two groups of students behave differently when facing challenges and ongoing difficulties, which determines their success in learning. It is evident that students with a growth mindset outperform those with a fixed mindset. Chan *et al.* (2020) addressed that fixed mindset students exhibit frustration once they are concerned about the chance of failure or when dealing with challenges in the learning process. Teachers and schools are, therefore, advised to help students develop a growth mindset by establishing high standards and



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expectations, determining short-term and achievable goals, providing constructive and meaningful feedback, and praising students wisely. Does it follow that fixed mindset students have lower standards and expectations? How do they differ from growth mindset students? If students with different mindsets were to participate in a learning activity, would they demonstrate different expectations and perceptions of the activity?

Among different types of learning activities, business colleges typically make use of study tours as an internationalisation strategy. Study tours are unique travel opportunities for students to study abroad within a short period, usually ranging from a few days to a few weeks. The international tour programmes mainly involve different types of learning activities, from formal learning and non-formal learning to informal learning. Sun and Xu (2021) pointed out that designing a study tour using inquiry approach enables students to be travellers instead of tourists, allowing them to engage, explore, and discover more. At the same time, students can strengthen their resilience and in turn manage any stress or tension arisen from encountering challenges, failure, or unexpected outcomes during their purposive educational travel.

Students can reinforce their learned knowledge, experience different cultures, and improve their transferable skills by joining a study tour. To a certain extent, a study tour incorporates the concepts of experiential learning (Romines, 2008), providing impactful learning opportunities for students to integrate in-class learning with out-of-class experiences (Howard and Keller, 2010; Hanis-Wesson and Ji, 2020) and to change cognitive thinking and behaviours (Chieffo and Griffiths, 2004). However, organising short-term, high-quality study tour programmes poses various challenges, including those related to management, financial commitment, resources, cost effectiveness, task and activity design, and risk assessment (Hanis-Wesson and Ji, 2020). Investigating study tours by focusing on students allows educators to conduct a more comprehensive study of students' expectations, perceptions, and impressions of these tours.

In previous studies, researchers have mainly addressed students' perceptions of study tours in terms of their relevance to employability skills (Aloudat, 2017) and students' revisit intentions (Xu and Ho, 2021), cultural awareness (Scharoun, 2016), course design and planning (Katherine *et al.*, 2019), and learning assessment tasks (Coe and Smyth, 2010; Hanis-Wesson and Ji, 2020). Black *et al.* (2019) conducted a critical review of 140 empirical studies on tour guiding and highlighted that the majority of study tour research focused on theory engagement. Xu (2019) also conducted a comprehensive review of 817 studies on study tours in China. Most of these research studies mainly concentrated on curriculum design, business model, student characteristics, and study tour products. To this end, the paper aims to address the gap in the literature related to students' mindsets and learning activities through investigation of the differences in students' expectations of, feelings towards, and perceptions of an overseas study tour based on their mindset (i.e., fixed versus growth). The study provides a more in-depth analysis of students with different mindsets and proposes the use of overseas tours and intercultural learning to foster students' growth mindset.

This remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. A literature review is provided in the first section. The research methods are then detailed in the next section, followed by key research findings and discussion. Finally, the conclusion, some recommendations and future research implications are presented.

Literature review

Study tour and learning

"Higher education is increasingly internationalised" (Gilbertson *et al.*, 2021, p. 577). Study tours provide experiential learning in real-life situations (Williams and Best, 2014). Reynaud and Northcote (2011, p. 255) pointed out that "participation in study tours can be deep and lifelong". International study tours provide students with the opportunity to enjoy cultural learning between international and local students, observe the operations of foreign

businesses, enrich their marketable skills and employment characteristics, expand their horizons, and learn about the work practices of international firms (Sohal and Ritter, 1995; Cooper, 2009). In addition, they can further develop intercultural attitudes and an intercultural mentality, which are particularly important for business students (Wang *et al.*, 2009). Students have demonstrated an upward trend in international study tour participation, with tours commonly lasting only a few weeks. In particular, students' engagement in international study tour experiences has increased dramatically to 16 percent and 23 percent in the United States and Australia, respectively (Gilbertson *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, study tours integrate the notion of peer-to-peer learning and adult learning, and they are an effective means of educational development for both knowledge seekers and providers (Hainzer *et al.*, 2021). They facilitate a transformative experience that can improve participants' intellectual competence and personal lives (Chieffo and Griffiths, 2004). Through study tour programmes, higher education institutions exhibit their commitment to the international experience and flexible delivery (Hutchings *et al.*, 2002).

Study tours are usually programmed with different learning activities, which can be formal, non-formal, or informal in nature. These three types of learning activities differ in terms of what they entail, students' motivation and interest, the social context, and the assessment methods (Maarschalk, 1988; Tamir, 1990). Formal learning activities usually constitute the core activities of study tours. Lectures, class activities, and assignments are typical examples of formal learning activities. They are undertaken on campus, where the learning environment is pre-arranged. Students' motivation is typically extrinsic. Teachers are responsible for managing learning and assessment activities. Therefore, these activities are well structured and well planned. Non-formal learning activities often include business visits, social activities, and local tours. They are structured and planned by organisers with students' involvement. Assessments are not always included. They are also pre-arranged and occur off campus, and so the atmosphere is relaxing and supportive. As such, students are typically more intrinsically motivated to join these activities. Informal learning activities normally involve intimate gatherings, chit chat, and casual conversations during the journey, occurring anytime and anywhere. Students volunteer to join these activities, and so their intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in pursuing informal learning. These learning activities are spontaneous, unstructured, and led by the students themselves. No assessments are involved. The environment is supportive, relaxed, and full of enjoyment, as students usually feel happy to take part in these casual activities.

Fixed mindset and growth mindset

The concept of mindset arose in the 21st century, and it has been adopted widely in academic research since 2000 (Beatson *et al.*, 2019). According to the mindset philosophy developed by Dweck (2006), mindset exists on a continuum from 'fixed' to 'growth'. Some students have a particular mindset, either fixed or growth. However, other students may be stuck in between, which is labelled as having a mixed mindset. Findings from a study tour to Japan suggest that students' mindsets and presumptions of self-competence affect their emotional responses to and acceptance of unexpected or adverse incidents. For example, the students encountered challenges when they communicated with the locals in Japanese or when they could not get used to Japanese-style food. The reflective journals showed that the students who were more open to new experiences perceived the cultural differences as learning points and were interested in exploring further. However, the students who were characterised by a fixed mindset made more complaints and demonstrated frustration. They also continually emphasised the differences as obstacles, such as by saying "I am not being in charge of myself completely" and "I felt like everyone was staring at me". The comparison between fixed and growth mindsets is summarised in Table 1.

Fixed mindset students believe that their intelligence and talent are inner gifts, which are constant. Success is the affirmation of their inner intelligence and ability. Failure and struggle are caused by limited abilities and capabilities. Fixed mindset students think that they are smart enough and do not believe that their intelligence and talent could be further developed by any means. Therefore, they avoid failure at all costs to maintain a sense of being skilled, talented, and smart. [Beatson et al. \(2019\)](#) elaborated that fixed mindset students are concerned about outcomes, adversely influenced by barriers, and overlook possibly supportive comments or criticisms. They do not consider learning effort to be a critical means of achieving success.

Growth mindset students strive for gradual change and improvement by seeking and adopting feedback ([Beatson et al., 2019](#)). They perceive difficulties and failures as learning opportunities and stepping stones that can help them perform better in the future. They believe that their intelligence and talent can be developed through persistence, good learning strategies, effort, time, experience, and advice from others. They do not worry about whether they are smart; instead, they focus on learning and development. They have ambitious goals and believe that they can achieve them if they put in extra time and effort. Growth mindset students are eager to try things and take risks. For example, they ask teachers to clarify math problems, answer questions in class even without any concrete solutions, raise ‘dumb’ questions, and identify problems that would push them out of their comfort zone ([Character LAB, n.d.](#)).

Research methods

An overseas study tour hosted by a private higher education institution in Hong Kong was selected for investigation. 13 sub-degree students participated in the study tour during the summer term in 2018. The quota for joining this tour was limited, and ultimately, a total of 13 Hong Kong applicants with similar academic backgrounds were selected. All of the selected candidates were expected to have outstanding academic performance (i.e., with grade point averages of at least 3.5), be engaged in various extracurricular activities, and exhibit satisfactory interview performance with strong English language proficiency. Two types of primary data were collected: quantitative and qualitative. This mixed approach aims to identify more complicated research issues and associations of the social and human world. Indeed, the mixed method can minimise ambiguous concepts and misinterpretations ([Malina et al., 2011](#)). Due to ethical considerations, only some of the interviewees’ personal particulars are disclosed in this study.

Quantitative data were collected via a close-ended questionnaire survey. The first part of the survey concerned the students’ impressions of the tour. Impression was assessed along with various learning outcomes on a 5-point Likert scale. Means and standard deviations

Growth Mindset	Fixed Mindset
Process oriented	Result oriented
Inspired by developing and learning about oneself	Inspired by the desire to support current beliefs of oneself
Evaluates performance in relation to material mastery	Evaluates performance in relation to peers
Confidence is quick to recover	Confidence is weak
Searches for precise responses	Screens out adverse responses
Concentrates on exerting more effort with regard to failure	Concentrates on improving self-esteem with regard to failure

Source: [Beatson et al. \(2019\)](#)

Table 1.
Comparison of fixed
and growth mindsets

were calculated to analyse the students' perceptions of the tour. The second part of the survey concerned the students' mindset, for which Dweck's (2006) mindset instrument was adopted. A total score covering two aspects – intelligence and talents – was calculated for each student.

To address the research objectives, qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews. The interview questions addressed the students' expectations and perceptions of the tour, opinions of what factors contribute to intercultural learning, and ideas of how to formulate study tour programmes. An exploratory research design was adopted, and thus, content analysis was conducted to categorise the wordings and count their frequencies.

The duration of the overseas study tour was 16 days (i.e., Days 1 to 8 of the tour took place in Winnipeg and Pinawa in Manitoba, Canada, and Days 9 to 16 took place in Hong Kong). First, Canadian students served as the tour guides for the Hong Kong students, helping them understand the Canadian culture and learning environment. Then, the Hong Kong students served as the tour guides for the Canadian students, helping them explore the Hong Kong culture and learning context. In this study tour, the students were divided into four groups, and each group consisted of a combination of Hong Kong and Canadian students. As expected, long-term relationships between the students from Hong Kong and Canada were formed. They were also able to improve their understanding of the cultural differences and business contexts between geographical regions in Asia and North America. In general, the tour activities were divided into formal and non-formal tour activities, as listed in Table 2.

Findings

Participants' general information and impressions of the tour

In general, the students were happy with the overseas tour (Figures 1 and 2). Four statements to assess the students' feelings about the tour on a 5-point Likert scale were selected. All students agreed (92.31 percent Strongly Agree plus 7.69 percent Agree) that the tour was a worthwhile learning experience and that they could learn something from the formal curriculum, yielding the same mean score of 4.92 for both items. They all indicated that they would recommend the overseas tour to their fellow students. Almost all students commented that the tour was useful for their current or future studies (69.23 percent Strongly Agree plus 23.08 percent Agree). The mean scores for these two items were 4.69 and 4.62, respectively.

In addition to measuring the students' general impressions of the tour as described above, seven items were used to measure their feelings towards the tour regarding different learning outcomes on a 5-point Likert scale (Figures 3 and 4). The results were largely positive, with mean scores ranging from 4.31 to 4.92. All students agreed that this overseas study tour helped develop their global perspective, facilitated their holistic development, and deepened their knowledge of heritage, art, and culture. Of the participants, 92.31 percent agreed (61.54

Formal Tour Activities	Non-Formal Tour Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture classes/workshops: Air Transportation Management; Business Negotiations; Transportation and Logistics Management; Entrepreneurship and Leadership; Business and Financial Market in Hong Kong and Greater China; Retail and Marketing in a Shopping Paradise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical visits: Canadian National Campus; New Flyer Industries; Hong Kong Stock Exchange; Hong Kong Museum of History; Gold Coast Hotel; Ngong Ping 360 Cable Car Social visits: Canadian Museum for Human Rights; Assiniboine Zoo; Excursions in Pinawa; Traditional Village at the Yuen Long Area Social-cultural activities: Dragon Boat Race; Ladies' Street; Temple Street; Tian Tan Buddha

Table 2. List of tour activities

Figure 1.
Students' general impressions of the tour

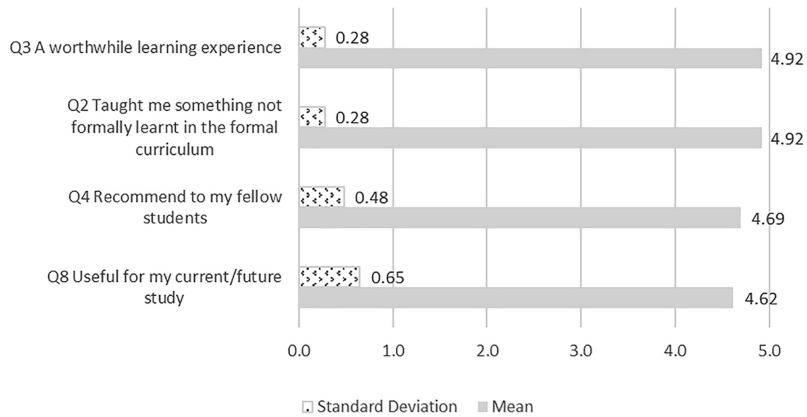
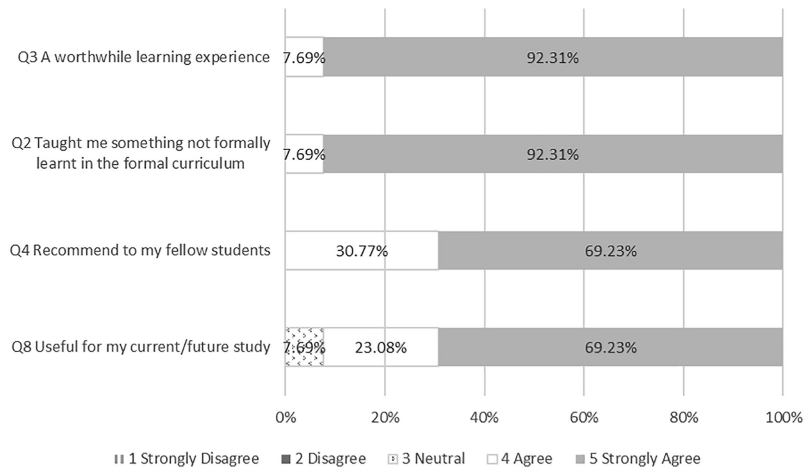


Figure 2.
Distribution of the students' general impressions of the tour



percent Strongly Agree plus 30.77 percent Agree) that their communication skills were strengthened as a result of joining this student activity. In addition, most of them concurred that their critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and ethical and social responsibility were enhanced. These encouraging findings confirm that international study tours can reinforce students' knowledge, facilitate cultural learning, and improve their transferable skills.

Perceived factors contributing to intercultural learning

From the students' perspective, interaction or communication was the key contributor to intercultural learning (32.43 percent), followed by class activities (18.92 percent) and visits/tours (18.92 percent). These factors align with the three main learning types: informal learning, formal learning, and non-formal learning, respectively. The results confirm the characteristics of international study tours, as discussed in the literature. More details can be found in [Table 3](#).

Of the 13 student participants, 7 demonstrated a growth mindset (53.85 percent), 5 a mixed mindset (38.46 percent), and 1 a fixed mindset (7.69 percent). For an even comparison, we combined the students demonstrating mixed and fixed mindsets into one group.

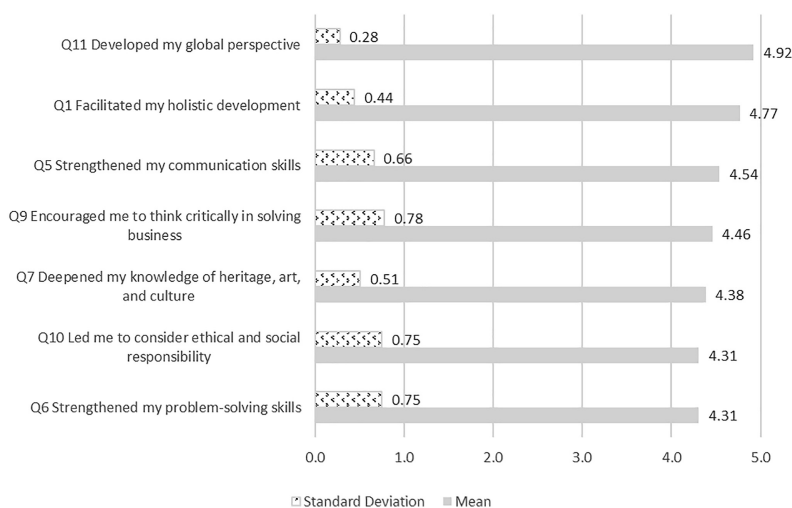


Figure 3. Students' tour impressions regarding the learning outcomes

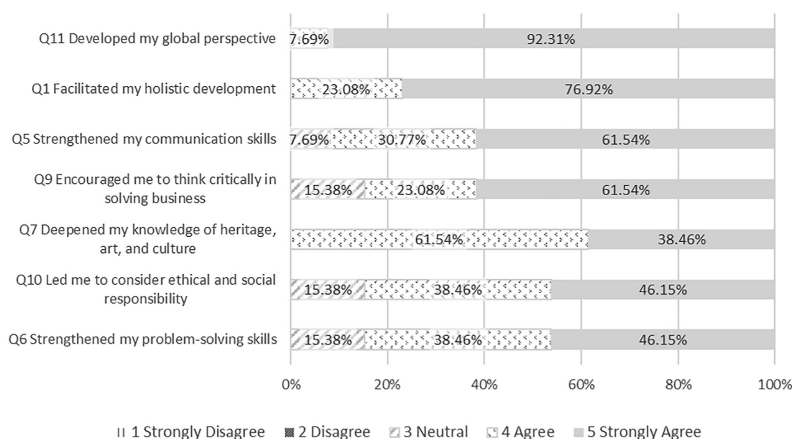


Figure 4. Distribution of the students' tour impressions regarding the learning outcomes

Types of Learning	Perceived Factors	Frequency n (%)
Formal	Class activities and workshops	7 (18.92%)
Non-formal	Visits or tours	7 (18.92%)
Non-formal	Out-of-class social activities	4 (10.81%)
Informal	Interaction or communication	12 (32.43%)
Informal	People	4 (10.81%)
Informal	Living with others	1 (2.70%)
Informal	Observation	1 (2.70%)
Informal	Atmosphere	1 (2.70%)
		100%

Table 3. Students' perceived factors contributing to intercultural learning

The authors classified and counted the frequency of the factors according to learning type (Table 4). The findings reveal a fascinating phenomenon. The growth mindset students adopted a balanced learning approach: formal learning (31.58 percent), non-formal learning (31.58 percent), and informal learning (36.84 percent). Thus, the importance of the three types of learning activities to these students' intercultural learning was comparable. Understanding the cultures of a country or region was not restricted to one type of learning activity. Different types of learning activities contributed to their intercultural learning.

In contrast, the fixed or mixed mindset students were biased towards the informal learning activities (66.67 percent; Table 4). As a type of formal learning, class activities were the least important factor (5.56 percent) contributing to these students' intercultural learning. Non-formal learning activities were ranked in between these two types of learning (27.78 percent). These students believed that informal learning activities play a more prominent role in intercultural education.

Students' expectations of the intercultural learning experience

Before joining the overseas study tour, the students formed some expectations of the tour programme and activities. Their expectations could be classified into two main areas: tour (16.67 percent) and self-development (83.33 percent; denoted as 'self' in Table 5). Their expectations were biased towards self-development, which was a good sign that they wanted to improve themselves after joining the tour. Most of the students hoped to experience the

Table 4.
Students' perceived factors contributing to intercultural learning (by mindset)

Types of Learning	Perceived Factors	Fixed or Mixed Mindset n (%)		Growth Mindset n (%)	
Formal	Class activities and workshops	1 (5.56%)	1 (5.56%)	6 (31.58%)	6 (31.58%)
Non-formal	Visits or tours	4 (22.22%)		3 (15.8%)	
Non-formal	Out-of-class social activities	1 (5.56%)	5 (27.78%)	3 (15.8%)	6 (31.58%)
Informal	Interaction or communication	7 (38.9%)		5 (26.3%)	
Informal	People	3 (16.67%)		1 (5.26%)	
Informal	Living with others	1 (5.56%)	12 (66.67%)	0 (0.00%)	7 (36.84%)
Informal	Observation	0 (0.00%)		1 (5.26%)	
Informal	Atmosphere	1 (5.56%)		0 (0.00%)	
			18 (100%)		19 (100%)

Table 5.
Students' expectations of the intercultural learning experience

Areas	Expectations	Frequency n (%)	
Tour	Longer tour duration	1 (5.56%)	3 (16.67%)
Tour	Having class activities or workshops	1 (5.56%)	
Tour	Having a visit (e.g., to a company)	1 (5.56%)	
Self	Experiencing the local culture, lifestyle, and economic situation	5 (27.78%)	
Self	Improving/learning interpersonal and communication skills	4 (22.22%)	
Self	Meeting new friends	3 (16.67%)	15 (83.33%)
Self	Boosting confidence	1 (5.56%)	
Self	Enhancing business knowledge	1 (5.56%)	
Self	More hangout time with local people	1 (5.56%)	
			18 (100%)

local culture, lifestyle, and economic situation (27.78 percent), as well as to learn or improve their interpersonal and communication skills (22.22 percent). They also wanted to meet new friends (16.67 percent) after joining the tour.

After dividing the students into two main groups based on mindset, it was surprising that the growth mindset students did not mention any tour-related expectations. Instead, their expectations were strongly related to their self-development (Table 6). Experiencing the local culture, lifestyle, and economic situation (55.56 percent) was the dominant expectation. The second was learning or improving their interpersonal and communication skills (22.22 percent). The remaining included meeting new friends (11.11 percent), enhancing their business knowledge (11.11 percent), and getting more time to hang out with local people (11.11percent).

The expectations of the fixed or mixed mindset students differed (Table 6), with 33.33 percent of the expectations related to the tour programme and the remaining 66.66 percent related to their personal development. They had three main expectations of the tour programme, including a longer tour duration, having class activities or workshops, and having company visits. Their expectations regarding personal development were more or less the same as those of the growth mindset students, but more evenly spread across the different aspects.

Students' satisfaction with the intercultural learning experience

According to Table 7, the students generally reported that their expectations were met (76.92 percent), particularly through different activities: interaction or communication, class activities, visits, and living in a hostel. Overall, the tour programme was well received. Only a few of the students believed that it could be improved. They mentioned that the duration of

Areas	Expectations	Fixed or Mixed Mindset n (%)	Growth Mindset n (%)
Tour	Longer tour duration	1 (11.11%)	0 (0.00%)
Tour	Having class activities or workshops	1 (11.11%)	0 (0.00%)
Tour	Having a visit (e.g., to a company)	1 (11.11%)	0 (0.00%)
Self	Experiencing the local culture, lifestyle, and economic situation	1 (11.11%)	5 (55.56%)
Self	Improving/learning interpersonal and communication skills	2 (22.22%)	2 (22.22%)
Self	Meeting new friends	2 (22.22%)	1 (11.11%)
Self	Boosting confidence	1 (11.11%)	0 (0.00%)
Self	Enhancing business knowledge	0 (0.00%)	1 (11.11%)
Self	More hangout time with local people	0 (0.00%)	1 (11.11%)
		9 (100%)	9 (100%)

Table 6. Students' expectations of the intercultural learning experience (by mindset)

Expectation Gaps	Frequency n (%)	Combined Frequency n (%)
Expectations not met	2 (15.38%)	
Expectations in between met and not met ¹	1 (7.69%)	3 (23.08%)
Expectations met	8 (61.54%)	
Exceeded expectations	2 (15.28%)	10 (76.92%)
		13 (100%)

Table 7. The gap between students' perceptions and expectations

¹Some areas met expectations, whereas some did not

the tour could be longer. Furthermore, they would have preferred having more time to interact with local students and to experience the local culture. They even sought the opportunity to visit the local students' homes and enjoy a meal with their family members.

As shown in Table 8, almost all of the fixed or mixed mindset students felt that their expectations were met or exceeded (83.33 percent). One student commented that the experience was great, but the duration of the tour was a bit short. Thus, his/her expectation was in between being met and not met. If the students were given more days to hang out with the local people, they would have had more time to experience the local culture.

Two of the growth mindset students felt that their expectations were not met (28.57 percent; Table 8). As mentioned, they preferred more interaction time with the local students, such as through social activities, home visits, and dinner with local families. They enjoyed staying with the local students and people, and more time would have allowed them to experience the local cultures and customs more profoundly.

Students' perceptions of the intercultural learning experience

The overseas study tour was a good experience for the students, as shown in Table 9. Their perceptions of the tour were mostly positive (89.47 percent), and they described the experience as a learning opportunity. The tour experience was perceived as great, meaningful, interesting, satisfactory, unforgettable, treasurable, beneficial, and helpful.

The distribution of positive and negative wordings between the two groups of students was similar without significant discrepancies. However, the growth mindset students used expressions to describe their tour experiences (Table 10). They used nine types of wording, whereas the fixed or mixed mindset students only used five types of wording. Thus, the growth mindset students used 1.8 times more types of wordings than those with a fixed or mixed mindset.

Table 8.
The gap between students' perceptions and expectations (by mindset)

Expectation Gaps	Fixed or Mixed Mindset n (%)		Growth Mindset n (%)	
Expectations not met	0 (0.00%)		2 (28.57%)	
Expectations in between met and not met ¹	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (28.57%)
Expectations met	4 (66.67%)		4 (57.14%)	
Exceeded expectations	1 (16.67%)	5 (83.33%)	1 (14.29%)	5 (71.43%)
		6 (100%)		7 (100%)

¹Some areas met expectations, whereas some did not

Table 9.
Students' perceptions of the intercultural learning experience

Category	Perception	Frequency n (%)	Combined Frequency n (%)
Negative	Insufficient time	2 (10.53%)	2 (10.53%)
Positive	Learning opportunity	5 (26.32%)	
Positive	Great experience	3 (15.78%)	17 (89.47%)
Positive	Meaningful experience	2 (10.53%)	
Positive	Interesting experience	2 (10.53%)	
Positive	Satisfactory experience	1 (5.26%)	
Positive	Unforgettable experience	1 (5.26%)	
Positive	Treasurable experience	1 (5.26%)	
Positive	Beneficial experience	1 (5.26%)	
Positive	Helpful to students	1 (5.26%)	

Discussion

An exploratory study was conducted to investigate the differences in students' expectations of, feelings towards, and perceptions of an intercultural learning tour based on whether students demonstrated a fixed or growth mindset. Making use of content analysis of the focus group interviews, some variations among students demonstrating different mindset types were identified (Table 11).

Students' fixed and growth mindsets

Fixed or mixed mindset students

The fixed or mixed mindset students believed that their intelligence and talents were innate gifts. This group of students tended to rely on limited approaches to accelerate their intercultural learning. They thought that informal learning activities were more critical to their intercultural learning. Interaction and communication with local students were the key to facilitating their learning of the local culture and customs.

Their expectations of the intercultural learning experience were slightly different. They did not have as much of a desire for personal development as the growth mindset students. They focused on both the tour and personal development. Their intention to develop their intelligence and talents was not high, which marked the difference in their mindset and learning behaviours.

Their perception of the overseas study tour was positive, but the wordings they chose were not diversified. The learning impacts on fixed mindset students are relatively shallow. In total, they used five types of wording to describe the intercultural learning experience,

Category	Perception	Fixed or Mixed Mindset n (%)		Growth Mindset n (%)	
Negative	Insufficient time	1 (12.50%)	1 (12.50%)	1 (9.09%)	1 (9.09%)
Positive	Learning opportunity	3 (37.5%)		2 (18.18%)	
Positive	Great experience	1 (12.50%)		2 (18.18%)	
Positive	Meaningful experience	2 (25.00%)		0 (0.00%)	
Positive	Interesting experience	1 (12.50%)		1 (9.09%)	
Positive	Satisfactory experience	0 (0.00%)	7 (87.50%)	1 (9.09%)	10 (90.91%)
Positive	Unforgettable experience	0 (0.00%)		1 (9.09%)	
Positive	Treasurable experience	0 (0.00%)		1 (9.09%)	
Positive	Beneficial experience	0 (0.00%)		1 (9.09%)	
Positive	Helpful to students	0 (0.00%)		1 (9.09%)	
			8 (100%)		11 (100%)

Table 10. Students' perceptions of the intercultural learning experience (by mindset)

	Fixed or Mixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Types of Learning Activities Contributing to Intercultural Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited Biased to informal learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversified Balance among the three types of learning activities (informal, non-formal, and formal learning)
Expectations of the Intercultural Learning Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on both the tour programme and personal development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong desire for personal development
Perceptions of the Intercultural Learning Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly positive Used fewer descriptors to express their learning experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largely positive Used more types of wording to describe their learning experiences

Table 11. Differences between the fixed/mixed mindset and the growth mindset

which were fewer than the number of wording types (nine) used by the growth mindset students. The most frequently mentioned descriptor was 'a learning opportunity', and the second was 'a meaningful experience'. Most of them also reported their expectations as being met. Some of their expectations were related to the tour (e.g., meeting new friends) and the planning of the tour (e.g., visiting different companies). It was, therefore, not surprising that their expectations were easily met.

Growth mindset students

The growth mindset students tended to adopt a more balanced approach to intercultural learning. They pointed out various types of tour activities, which could be categorised into formal learning, non-formal learning, and informal learning. Their learning approaches were more diversified. They applied various learning methods to understand the culture, customs, and business situations of the host country and regions. Using different approaches to learning knowledge and skills greatly benefitted the students. They could comprehend each issue or challenge from various perspectives, thereby enhancing their understanding. Ultimately, they could articulate their experience in depth, compare or challenge what they knew or learned, then assimilate and create new knowledge on global awareness, and set themselves up for greater achievements in the future. For example, the students were able to compare and evaluate the different perceptions of car ownership in Canada and Hong Kong when they engaged in informal activities. According to one student, "Canadians consider a car to be a necessity, but Hong Kong people consider a car to be a luxury".

Their expectations of the intercultural learning experience were more personal than those of the fixed or mixed mindset students. They sought self-development through joining the tour, particularly by experiencing the local culture, lifestyle, and economic situation, as well as by improving their interpersonal and communication skills. They did not mention any tour-related expectations. They had a stronger desire to develop themselves and aimed to pursue self-development, growth, and positive change. Study tours were considered a critical means of enhancing their transferable skills, their exposure to different cultures and business situations, and their business knowledge. However, their expectations were not met to the same extent as those of the fixed or mixed mindset students. It could be argued that they had higher or more expectations, such that they intended to learn more and experience more during the tour.

When asked about their perceptions of intercultural learning, the growth mindset students gave more positive expressions. They also used more types of wordings than the other group of students. Their learning attitudes and behaviours might have played a significant role here.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study provides an in-depth analysis of students' mindsets. Intercultural learning through well-planned overseas study tours can be used to foster students' growth mindset. First, organisers or schools should include three types of activities in their tour programmes: formal learning, non-formal learning, and informal learning. The activities must be balanced to allow students to experience the culture, develop transferable skills, and strengthen their learned knowledge. Formal learning activities could include lectures, workshops, and class activities. The main objective of these activities is to reinforce their knowledge and develop transferable skills. Formal interaction opportunities among students, teachers, and even local people could be arranged, such as case discussion and sharing, consultation with teachers and practitioners, and project-based learning. Non-formal activities could be visits to any local companies and tourist attractions for educational purposes. To facilitate informal learning,

arrangements could be made for students to stay in a hostel. In addition, more social gathering time could be incorporated between the formal and informal activities to facilitate interaction and communication among students. The organisers could also organise team competitions throughout the tour.

Second, organisers should help students set proper expectations of overseas study tours. Personal growth and development must be emphasised if they join a tour. All participants should attend a pre-tour workshop. In the workshop, they should be directed to set personal goals related to various transferable skills. They could be divided into teams and create strategies for achieving their individual goals together. During the study tour, they should be required to report their progress and make plans to improve if needed. After the tour, they should be invited to reflect on their goal achievement. Through this type of learning, students could set reasonable goals and expectations of the tour in terms of their personal development. They could also do so for the improvement of their learning attitudes and behaviours.

Third, previous tour participants could share their tour experiences during the pre-tour workshop. The tour experiences of previous participants might cultivate future cohorts' self-development awareness and lifelong learning intention. They could be role models and serve to inspire future participants to set their goals and plans for personal development, lifelong learning, and intercultural learning. Learning through peers is compelling, as it is easier for students to communicate among themselves. Students should be invited to share their study tour experience with the next cohort of students. Teaching others is at the highest level of the learning pyramid. This would help further embed positive learning attitudes, behaviours, and ambitious goals in their mind.

Future research directions

This paper was limited to one study tour with 13 participants. Future research could investigate more study tours and involve more participants to derive a more representative sample to further inform the study tour and mindset literature.

Second, this study adopted an exploratory study method with in-depth analysis. In future, descriptive research could be conducted to measure study tour participants' achievement of expectations and goals. A pre-tour survey could be conducted in which students are required to indicate the skills they want to acquire. After the tour, they could self-rate each skill they have learned. Statistical tests could then be performed to measure changes and improvements in their personal development.

Third, the research focus was on study tours. Other learning activities could be investigated to determine how teachers and schools can utilise them to foster a growth mindset among students. Having a growth mindset can help students face and fulfil the demands of an increasingly globalised and interconnected world (Cole, 2018). Researchers could also explore the possible role of exchange programmes, leadership training programmes, student mentoring programmes, and other learning activities in driving a growth mindset among students. In addition, a theoretical framework of educational tourism could be developed to contribute to destination marketing and learning pedagogy. This would advance interdisciplinary research between the education and tourism management disciplines.

Fourth, sub-degree students were the target participants. In future, we may consider conducting a comparative study between sub-degree and degree students to generalise the findings.

Fifth, owing to the study design, it was impossible to make causal inferences on the relationship between incumbent mindset attributes and intended learning outcomes. As such, a longitudinal follow-up study utilising structural equation modelling will be conducted to test and evaluate multivariate casual relationships.

Sixth, content analysis was conducted to analyse the data. In order to enrich interview findings in future studies, grounded theory via thematic analysis can be used.

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