

# Development of International Education Industry in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area

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**Abstract:** Building the Greater Bay Area city cluster is a crucial national development strategy for China. As a vital hub of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Greater Bay Area cannot cultivate into an “international first-class bay area and world-class city cluster” without technological innovation and rapid economic progress, and technological innovation and economic development cannot be attained without the training of high-end talents through international education. Thus, the development of an international education demonstration zone is essential in the formation and development of the Greater Bay Area and making it a highland for education and talent, as well as giving full play to the social function of education. As the core of the accumulation of educational resources in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, the current situation, future opportunities, and development path of international education development in the Greater Bay Area while building a world-class international education center have become the starting point of this study.

**Keywords:** International Education Industry; Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area

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## 1 Introduction

In 2019, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area, highlighting that the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area (the “Greater Bay Area”)

should be developed as a highland for education and talents, as well as support the Greater Bay Area in constructing an international education demonstration zone. Building the Greater Bay Area city cluster is a crucial national development strategy for China. As a vital hub of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Greater Bay Area cannot cultivate into an “international first-class bay area and world-class city cluster” without technological innovation and rapid economic progress, and technological innovation and economic development cannot be attained without the training of high-end talents through international education. Thus, the development of an international education demonstration zone is essential in the formation and development of the Greater Bay Area and making it a highland for education and talent, as well as giving full play to the social function of education. As the core of the accumulation of educational resources in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, the current situation, future opportunities, and development path of international education development in the Greater Bay Area while building a world-class international education center have become the starting point of this study.

## 2 Connotation and Form of International Education

### 2.1 Connotation of International Education

The Institute of International Education first introduced the concept of “international education” in 1919, and it has been under development for about a century now. The definition of international education differs in academic circles. The Dictionary of Education defines “international education” in

three dimensions—a sub-discipline of education, the content of education, and the educational program. As a sub-discipline of education, international education focuses on issues of transnational cultural education and the effect of the interaction among economic, political, social, and educational factors on international relations. As educational content, international education enables learners to acquire language skills, knowledge base, attitudes, and perceptions to understand, analyze, and judge international issues. Finally, as an educational program, international education facilitates academic exchange among teachers, students, and scholars worldwide.

The globalization of the economy has provided a new connotation to the concept of “international education.” It aims to nurture talent resources with international understanding through the transnational exchange of educational resources, teachers, students, knowledge, information, and culture via international exchange agencies and institutions. The concept of international education has two dimensions. First, it needs to transcend national geographic boundaries and emphasize national differences. Moreover, it must be an educational program and educational activity with transnational educational resources, scholars, knowledge, and culture. Second, international education is a global perspective that equips the educated with language skills, knowledge base, open-mindedness, and up-to-date ideas needed to perceive the world as a whole, and is dedicated to cultivating talent resources with an international perspective that are concerned with global population, nationality, environment, peace, multiculturalism, and economic development.

## **2.2 Form of International Education**

International education comprises the following four forms: cross-border mobility of educational institutions; cross-border mobility of project resources; cross-border mobility of personnel; and education for international understanding. Cross-border mobility of educational institutions implies the cross-border international collaboration in education,

the cross-border establishment of international education, and training institutions. Cross-border mobility of project resources denotes international mobility through cross-border educational cooperation projects, international education and training programs, and online learning programs. Cross-border mobility of personnel involves cross-border training of teachers and cross-border students’ study, primarily through study abroad education. Finally, education for international understanding signifies the establishment of international classes, international high schools, and the introduction and export of international curricula. All four forms of international education permeate different types and stages of education, creating a rich international education system encompassing higher education, secondary education, and fundamental education.

## **3 Development Overview of International Schools in China**

During the initial period of China’s establishment, the Pakistan Embassy College Beijing (PECB) was built in 1969, becoming the first international school in China, accepting children of only diplomatic envoys. After the reform and opening-up, International School of Beijing, the first international school to adopt a genuinely foreign teaching and management system, was established in 1980 by the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, and Singapore. China’s modern international school is a part of a group of schools that have emerged in China since the reform and opening-up, focusing on fundamental education from kindergarten to high school, and partially or entirely adopting the international curriculum model and assessment system. With the furthering of China’s opening up to the world, the total number of accredited international schools in Mainland China as of 2020, based on the 2020 Annual Report of International Schools in China, is 907 [113 schools for children of expatriates, 535 private international schools, and 259 international departments (classes) of public schools according to the different types of school operation].

**Table 1.** Main Types of International Schools in China

	<b>International Division of Public Schools</b>	<b>Private International Schools</b>	<b>Schools for Children of Foreigners</b>
Definition	International divisions and international classes established by law in public schools	Schools organized by social organizations or individuals other than state institutions, using non-state financial resources, for the community to apply to foreign universities.	Schools specializing in providing educational services for the children of foreign nationals in China, which are run by foreign institutions, foreign-funded enterprises, international organizations in China, and legally resident foreigners in compliance with the law.
Existing Quantity	259	535	113
Proportion	28.6%	58.9%	12.5%
Representative Schools	SDSZ International Department, the High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China Joint Programs (ICC), Huafu International (HFI), Experimental Course of Shenzhen Middle School (SMS), Guangzhou Foreign Language School International Department	Beanstalk International Bilingual School, YK Pao School, Maple Leaf International School, Shanghai United International School Jiaoke Campus, Shenzhen College of International Education.	International School of Beijing, Dulwich College Beijing, Shanghai American School, Shanghai Livingston American School, Shen Wai International School

## 4 Analysis of the Current Development of International Education in the Greater Bay Area

### 4.1 Domestic Perspective: Current Development of International Education Cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau

Nationally, the number of international schools in China continued to grow in 2020. Per the 2020 Annual Report of International Schools in China, as of September 2020, 53 newly established international schools were officially completed and started operating in China. Regarding the growth rate of international schools, Guangdong Province is proliferating, profiting from the construction

of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area International Education Demonstration Zone. By 2020, the number of international schools in Guangdong Province is the highest in the country, with 140 schools. However, the number of international schools in Beijing and Shanghai has declined after years of rapid growth, with Shanghai currently ranking second in the country with 112 accredited international schools and Beijing following closely with close to 100 internationally accredited schools. Per the international school data in major cities in Guangdong Province, the number of new international schools in 2020 is as high as 9 in Shenzhen, 4 in Guangzhou, and 3 each in Dongguan and Foshan. Given below are the details of the new international schools (Table 2).

**Table 2.** The details of the new international schools

City	Schools	Enrollment
Shenzhen	Harrow International School	Kindergarten to senior high school
	Taiziwan International School, Shekou	Senior high school
	Shenzhen College of International Education new Campus	Senior high school
	BASIS Futian Bilingual Campus	Kindergarten to junior high school (Direct Entry for Senior High school)
	Shenzhen International Foundation College	Senior high school
	Invictus Singapore	Kindergarten to high school
	the King's School Shenzhen International	Kindergarten to junior high school
	Princeton Sky Lake International School	Kindergarten to junior high school
	Nord Anglia School Shenzhen	Kindergarten to senior high school
	ISA Science City School	Kindergarten to senior high school
Guangzhou	Nord Anglia School Guangzhou, Panyu	Kindergarten to junior high school stage
	Fettes College Guangzhou	Kindergarten to senior high school
	Nord Anglia International School Guangzhou	Kindergarten to junior high school
Dongguan	St. Bees Dongguan	The first enrollment is at the high school level In the future, there will be a primary school department and a junior middle school
	EUROPE-UK College	Junior high school to senior high school
Foshan	Haide Bilingual School Dongguan	Kindergarten to senior high school
	LEH International School Foshan	Middle school to senior high school
	Foshan Meisha Bilingual School	Primary school to junior high school
	Nanhai (Lishui) Bilingual Experimental School	Primary school to senior high school

From the viewpoint of the integrated development of the Greater Bay Area, international education in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau remains highly heterogeneous (refer to Table 3 for details). Specifically, the international departments (international classes) of public schools remain under the background of the domestic education system and are still in a period of adjustment in terms of the cultural environment, educational philosophy,

teaching mode, and degree of internationalization. During the international education integration development in the Greater Bay Area, influenced by the more sensitive political environment in Hong Kong in recent years, and the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, the current international education development in the Greater Bay Area, although leading in China, is still facing many hurdles within the Bay Area and has not yet attained the desired results.

**Table 3.** Comparative Analysis of the Difference in the Social System, Cultural Environment, and Educational Models between Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao

	Guangdong	Hong Kong	Macao
Social System	Socialist system	Capitalist system	Capitalist system
Cultural Environment	Lingnan culture	English culture	Portuguese culture
Educational Concept	People-oriented and all-round development	Whole-person development, lifelong learning	Diversified development
Educational Models	Quality education	Whole person education	General education
Level of International education development	Under the influence of the socialist education system, international education represented by international classes in public schools, the educational philosophy and teaching mode are reformed from traditional examination-based education, and a gap still exists between the management system, community activities, international teachers and curriculum, and internationalization.	The educational concept and teaching mode draw on the strengths of both Chinese and Western education models, drawing on international cutting-edge educational concepts while adapting to localization and making corresponding innovations.	The educational concept and teaching mode are consistent with international standards, and there exist many foreign teachers and teachers with overseas study experience, with an open and diversified international educational philosophy.

#### 4.2 International Perspective: International Education in the Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau Greater Bay Area versus the San Francisco Bay Area

A pluralistic form of education is the logical

initiation of talent cultivation in modern society, and modern education should be cultivated as an educational system applicable to different types of talents to accomplish the development of society. The expansion of international education in the San

Francisco Bay Area is characterized most prominently by multicultural exchange and integration. The ratio of Asian-Americans and African-Americans in colleges and universities of the San Francisco Bay Area is high, and foreign immigrants have become a vital source of students for international education. The amalgamation and coalescing of different cultures in the San Francisco Bay Area further enrich international education diversity. Meanwhile, open-resource sharing is another significant characteristic of international education in the San Francisco Bay Area. As the Internet's birthplace, the Silicon Valley in the San Francisco Bay Area has led open educational resource sharing based on the Internet technology, creating numerous online platforms

for free sharing, exchange, and interaction in the Bay Area. Besides, Stanford University, renowned for its computer science disciplines, has launched online open courses and online learning certification, facilitating the efficient flow of excellent educational resources in the Bay Area. The Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area and the San Francisco Bay Area share some similarities in industrial structure. Regarding the regional flow of educational resources, international education in the Greater Bay Area is remains restricted by one country, two systems, and three legal systems, and the exchange and interoperability of excellent educational resources among the three regions and the degree of popularity warrant augmentation.

**Table 3.** Comparison of Educational Resources between Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area and San Francisco Bay Area

	Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area	San Francisco Bay Area
Number of cities	11	12
Social system	One Country, Two Systems, Three Legal Systems	Capitalist system
Major industries	Manufacturing, Finance, Internet	Internet, information technology, high-tech enterprises
Regional Mobility of Educational Resources	It is more limited by the social system, legal system, and administrative system of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao.	Efficient flow of educational resources across geographies, fields, and industries in the Bay Area and collaborative innovation.
Educational Form	Academic research, applied research, applied technology, and applied skills colleges and universities.	Teaching universities, comprehensive universities, research universities, community colleges, professional institutions.

## 5 Opportunities and Pathways for the Development of International Education in the Greater Bay Area

### 5.1 Analysis of Development Opportunities

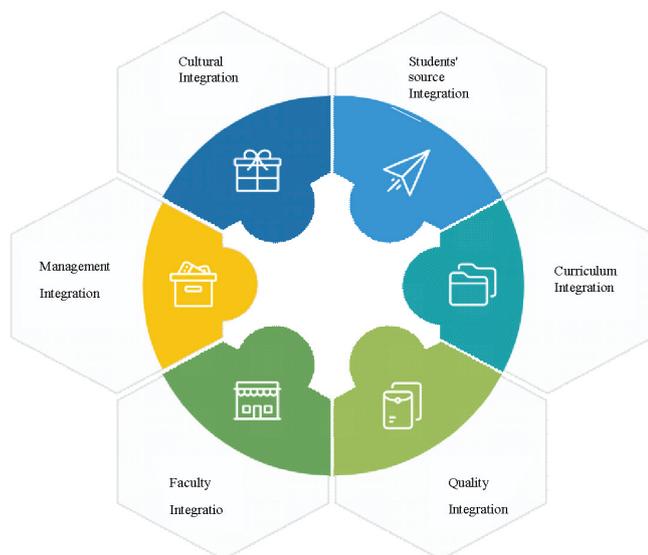
First, the geographical proximity of the three places in the Greater Bay Area and their geographical and transportation convenience create the essential conditions for creating knowledge, innovation, and the diffusion of technology exchange. Besides, it is easier for the three places to establish a healthy competitive relationship that is mutually complementary, interdependent, and competitive. In the development of international education in the Greater Bay Area, previous institutional barriers are progressively integrating and evolving with the help of policies, providing opportunities for collaboration and exchange of teachers, courses, programs, institutions, and other higher education elements in the Greater Bay Area.

Second, the development of the Greater Bay Area has a distinctive “late-mover advantage.” Benchmarking with the three mature world-class

bay areas, it is evident that knowledge production, an innovative driving force, is indispensable for establishing the growth pole of regional economic development, and endorsing the cross-border flow of excellent educational resources has become a consensus. Thus, the differences in the social system, major industries, and cultural background of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau offer great opportunities for collaboration and development of international education in the Greater Bay Area.

### 5.2 Exploring the Development Pathways

The development of international education in the Greater Bay Area requires nurturing of talents with core literacy, national awareness, and international vision of the twenty-first century, among which the skills like critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, and collaboration are especially significant. In the future, education will focus on both humanities and technology. Hence, this paper contends that integrated education will become a prominent development path of international education in the Greater Bay Area (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Exploring International Integrated Education in the Greater Bay Area.

First and foremost is the integration of educational philosophy. China's traditional education philosophy focuses on hierarchical management culture centered on schools and teachers. From the perspective of quality education, the Western concept of "human-centered, all-round development" has been completely adopted, accentuating the subjectivity of students in the process of education and growth. Modern education warrants respect for individual differences, interests and strengths of students, giving full play to each student's potential and encouraging individual differentiation. Thus, the "student-centered" philosophy of international education depicts the value of modern education choices. For example, Whittle School is committed to training bilingual speakers with both Chinese roots and a global perspective. Its curriculum is based on Chinese textbooks and adheres to the Chinese National Curriculum standards while adopting the best teaching methods and principles from around the globe and integrating core literacy developed in collaboration with the Center for Curriculum Redesign at Harvard University. Whittle Studios is a crucial implementation of Whittle's educational philosophy. In teaching and learning, the focus is not only on the transmission of knowledge in the traditional classroom but also on the expansion of various extracurricular elective courses and activities oriented toward the cultivation of "soft power" outside the classroom. In the language classroom, for instance, not only is language knowledge taught in the textbook but also language learning is extended

beyond the classroom into optional studies in classical literature, social sciences, drama, and the arts per the direction of students' interests to expand the breadth of knowledge as a basis for shaping students' appreciation and discernment of the humanities comprehensively.

The second is the integration of teaching and learning management. As the purveyors of international education resources and practitioners of cross-cultural exchange, foreign teachers play a critical role in the quality of teaching and learning. During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, per the IAU survey, two-thirds of schools worldwide switched to online teaching, and 80% of the scientific research was affected, as evidenced by 83% of international trips being canceled, 81% of scientific conferences being canceled or postponed, and an additional 52% of research projects not completed on schedule. International education is a test of the aptitude of international school teams to collaborate. With some foreign teachers unable to enter China because of the pandemic, the key to integrating teaching and learning management in international schools is how to use online teaching platforms to reconfigure teaching and learning organization and curriculum patterns, as well as build a new form of cohesive online and offline teaching and learning management. Third is the integration of teaching teams. The expansion of international education in the Greater Bay Area warrants a complete integration of local and external teachers within the school. Amid rising STEAM education, a course will need a team of teachers from different backgrounds to finish the teaching task, and the "in-school + out-of-school" dual-teacher team will become the standard for guiding students to enhance their practical skills. Furthermore, the exchange of excellent educational resources and teaching collaboration among Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao will become a crucial way to augment international education quality.

The fourth is the curriculum integration. International schools are designed to enrich the curriculum to reflect the differentiated, diverse, informative, and latest modern education characteristics. International education is supplemented by elective courses in the arts, artificial intelligence, big data analysis, financial literacy, programming, jazz, 3D printing, and other content.

For example, Shenzhen Campus of Avenues: The World School has created a global–local curriculum based on the global perspective and local culture. After being set in Shenzhen, the school designed the teaching content and methods best suited to the Shenzhen campus and piloted the first phase of the Avenues Master Academy program in 2017. After studying in Shenzhen for nearly a month, students from Shenzhen Campus of Avenues: The World School started by sourcing components from the Huaqiang North electronics market in Shenzhen and worked in small groups to create a smartphone by finishing tasks like programming and assembly. Avenues learning guides students to learn about local culture and grow up with the world. Such integration of interdisciplinary curriculum triggers the development of students’ multidisciplinary and creative skills. Notably, STEAM education and technology education will become increasingly critical in a future where the Internet is further advanced. Such programs reflect the pedagogical variations that modern education has made to adapt to the development of society and promote and pass on the advanced civilization of the world.

The fifth is the integration of international cultures. In the era of globalization, cross-border education collaboration within the Greater Bay Area is becoming increasingly frequent. The need for people to comprehend and respect each other’s diverse cultures and values in international exchanges has placed growing demands on the internationalization of modern education. Thus, the international schools’ development path should evolve from bilingual education to one that integrates a greater blend of Chinese and Western cultures into the campus atmosphere. For example, the Keystone Academy in Beijing has its roots in Chinese traditional culture, blending Chinese, American, and international

educational philosophies. The five courtyards within the Keystone Academy are named “metal,” “wood,” “water,” “fire,” and “earth,” following the “Five Elements” of Chinese culture, fostering a love of Chinese culture and a sense of Chinese identity in the context of globalization.

Sixth is the integration of students. The multi-campus setting of international schools worldwide creates better conditions for the exchange and integration of students. For example, students at Avenues: The World School can move freely between multiple campuses around the world, with the Shenzhen campus interoperating with the New York, Silicon Valley, and Miami campuses, creating a firmly integrated global education system of a shared curriculum and a highly integrated global “learning community” supported by a global admissions policy, further endorsing the integration of international school students.

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