

leading lights

Looking at it from a certain perspective ...

Can you say that you've made a solid decision about something after looking at all sides of the argument? Bakhita Fung can, writes **Nicola Chan**, and she won an award for being the best at it in Hong Kong last year, too

One of the worst things you can do when making a decision - any kind of decision, really - is not examining or considering all the different perspectives and possible outcomes. That's not an issue for Bakhita Fung.

The Island School student was awarded an Outstanding Cambridge Learner Award (Hong Kong) on November 11 for her high marks - the best in Hong Kong - in last year's International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) global perspectives exam.

Young Post spoke to the top-scoring Year 12 student about her grades, global perspectives, and how the subject has helped her in her everyday life.

"In global perspectives, you're encouraged to understand the limitations of certain arguments," Bakhita, 16, said.

"It's helped me to balance different points of views, and has allowed me to explore a lot of issues that I'm interested in, such as tradition, culture, identity, law, and criminality."

The subject, Bakhita said, allows students to do this because the elective demands a substantial amount of coursework - it counts for 40 per cent of their final grade - on topics of their own choice. There's a wide variety of subjects to choose from, and the coursework can examine anything from belief systems, to conflict and peace, to technology, to sports.

Despite the heavy workload that goes with this demanding elective, Bakhita said she loved having

the freedom to focus on a subject she's interested in, but that trying to understand the local, national, and global perspectives of an issue was very challenging.

"Putting aside your own biases and preconceived ideas of how societies work is hard," she said. We know that cultures and systems, whether political or societal, differ from one place to another, she said, but our view of what a community is or should be is usually influenced by what we know.

Sometimes, she added, that's limiting; but studying global perspectives has helped her to become more impartial when it comes to analysing social issues. "I read from different sources, and tried to be critical of what I was reading."

The exam, Bakhita said, was hard - mainly because there were plenty of open-ended questions that could have been interpreted in any number of ways. For example, there was a question asking students to explain which

Global perspectives has allowed me to explore a lot of issues I'm interested in

particular cause of a specific event was most significant. Another of the essay questions required students to judge which two writers demonstrated better reasoning in supporting their arguments.

Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards



Bakhita (right) was presented with her award by HKU's professor Grahame Bilbow. Photo provided by: Bakhita Fung

"If you're scared by these types of questions, you should [do] more past papers," she said, adding that closely examining past marking schemes can help, too - it will show you what sort of questions come up time and time again.

There are always two essay-type questions worth 12 and 18 marks respectively, Bakhita said, so make sure you go into the exam with some sort of structure for your answer in mind. "Make sure you stick to it," she advised.

Wise words of advice from Hong Kong's top scorer for last year's global perspectives!

Edited by Ginny Wong