



Incorporating Global Citizenship Education into TVET

Cultivating students' global awareness and intercultural competence

Promising Practice

Implemented by: Shaanxi Polytechnic University (SNPU), a leading TVET provider in Northwest China. SNPU has 22,000 students and offers 65 diploma programmes together with 249 industry partnerships. SNPU has more than 150 global collaboration partners, including with multiple TVET providers across different countries offering student and faculty exchanges, research cooperation and networking opportunities.

Where: People's Republic of China

Status: Started in April 2010

Summary: Shaanxi Polytechnic University (SNPU) Global Citizenship Education (GCED) programme integrates global citizenship education principles into TVET curricula to cultivate students' global awareness and intercultural competence. The purpose is to support a sustainable mindset and to encourage proactive engagement in solving global challenges among students. The programme is delivered alongside their technical training programme. It is part of a larger aim to build international TVET partnerships.

Overview

Shaanxi Polytechnic University (SNPU) aims to prepare its students for a globalized world, equipping them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to thrive in the international context. A commitment to fostering students' global citizenship and social responsibility capability is central to SNPU's organizational goals of developing partnerships with other TVET providers and institutions across the world. All SNPU graduates are trained to be technically proficient as well as possess the intercultural competence, sustainability mindset, and active citizenship skills necessary to function in a global workforce.

Description

The Global Citizenship Education (GCED) programme is an integral part of SNPU's fourteenth five-year strategy that aims to develop students as global citizens as well as build partnerships with other TVET providers and institutions across the world. Prior to this initiative, an internal audit at SNPU showed that in 2023 only 15% of TVET courses included global perspectives. A 2024 survey showed that 60% of graduates struggled with intercultural communication when participating in an international placement. A 2023 employer survey of SNPU graduates provided feedback that alumni lacked sustainability awareness in the workplace. The GCED programme was introduced into all TVET courses to mitigate these findings.

All TVET curriculum at Shaanxi Polytechnic University now includes GCED training modules. All students, regardless of area of discipline, are required to study them. Given the diversity of students, GCED modules are delivered through experiential learning techniques.

The core GCED training modules include:

- Cross-cultural communication and understanding
- Social responsibility and ethical decision making
- Aesthetic education and cultural arts

- Innovation and entrepreneurship
- Legal and ethical education

The modules cover topics such as sustainable development, cultural diversity, social responsibility and ethical considerations. The topics are taught using case studies, simulation and project-based collaborative learning to foster students critical thinking skills. SNPU continuously reviews GCED curriculum to ensure relevance and provides regular teacher training and student assessment. Professional development for teachers provides educators with various learner-centred approaches through participatory methods which help engage students in active problem solving and critical thinking.

Upon graduating their TVET course, SNPU students are expected to have gained greater awareness of global concerns, be more able to build relationships with people from other cultures, have the capacity to analyse their actions from a sustainability perspective and be active global citizens.

GCED as part of a larger global cooperation programme

The GCED initiative is part of a larger programme for SNPU to build global partnerships with other governments, TVET providers and industry. Such partnerships extend to African countries including Ethiopia, Nigeria and Zambia, as well as to Indonesia and New Zealand. The partnerships support multiple activities, examples include:

- Supporting Zambian, Nigerian and Ethiopian educators to build modern, accredited national TVET programmes. As of 2025, 15 internationally aligned TVET programmes were created including in mechanical manufacturing and automation.
- Providing industry-based training at power generation plants in both China and Indonesia to align on e.g. health and safety expectations and communications (including use of a common language).

Specific partnerships have been built, examples include:

- Developing GCED micro credentials together with a TVET provider in New Zealand.²
- Creating teacher and learner exchange programmes with TVET providers in Nigeria and Zambia.
- Offering online support for teachers/trainers to learn about Chinese culture ('Chinese Bridge' online group).
- Participating in international discussions on the importance of GCED in TVET curricula amongst UNEVOC Network members.



Fig 1.1 TVET courses (chemical technology) at SNPU offer global citizenship education¹

¹ Photo submitted by SNPU

² With Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī.



Fig 1.2 SNPU has initiated partnerships with TVET providers in Zambia and a capacity building training programme for Indonesian faculty³

SNPU's recruitment of international students and teachers contributes to a diverse learning environment where they are encouraged to organize cultural activities and share their culture with their Chinese colleagues.

Objectives

The main goal of the GCED initiative at SNPU is to support students to thrive in a globalized research and networking environment; for students to understand not just technological best practice related to their field of study but to understand broader goals such as:

- Awareness and understanding of global issues and to promote a deeper understanding of how topics such as sustainability impacts local and global communities.
- Intercultural competence by providing opportunities for cross-cultural interactions, exchanges and cooperation, and to encourage respect and empathy for more effective communication amongst people from diverse backgrounds.
- Sustainable thinking and a mindset of environmental responsibility which helps learners to contribute to the preservation of national resources.
- Active citizenship to utilize knowledge and skills to make a positive impact through community service, entrepreneurship and initiatives which address pressing global challenges.

In addition to these objectives, SNPU is building organizational partnerships and research networks with other TVET institutions throughout the world enabling physical and online exchange, and mutual cross-cultural learning.

³ Photo submitted by SNPU.

Outcomes and impact

For SNPU students, GCED has broadened their global perspectives through the learning modules and their intercultural competence through building international networks and exchange opportunities. Students demonstrate awareness and understanding of sustainable development, cultural diversity and social responsibility. Experiential learning has supported the development of other critical skills such as problem-solving, adaptability and communication skills underpinned by greater sensitivity and empathy. A new student mindset is being cultivated to appreciate environmental responsibility and to actively engage in issues as global citizens.

Teachers have also benefited from learning about the importance of GCED skills in the 21st century and by receiving additional support for new teaching practices. SNPU faculty are also working with TVET centres in other countries in research projects. They cooperate on GCED training and can participate in two-way exchange programmes.

At the institutional level, SNPU has entered into multiple international partnerships. The GCED initiative spans cultural and educational dimensions, preparing students and faculty for an increasingly interconnected world. For example, since 2018 approximately 430 SNPU students have participated in international exchange programmes which can vary in length from a short-term study tour to a semester studying abroad in a partner provider. More than 380 faculty members have engaged in international teaching, training or research exchanges lasting from two weeks to three months. Since 2020, SNPU has worked on five international research projects. Such exchanges and collaborations have taken place across multiple institutions across the world including in Africa, Europe, North America, Oceania and south-east Asia.

Insights and challenges faced

Making space in the busy schedules of TVET teachers and students for global citizenship education is difficult. Maintaining a long-term commitment and support for global initiatives generally is challenging as funding and institutional priorities shift over time. SNPU has addressed these risks through integrating the aims of global initiatives and GCED into its five-year organizational strategic plan, teacher training programmes and learner curricula.

Teachers and learners must be ready and prepared to engage internationally and to exchange with partners in other countries. Providing them with training and exchange opportunities with international partners has fostered institutional support. This has been done in an inclusive way with sensitivity to the diverse backgrounds and previous experience of teachers and learners and their different learning styles.

Building long-term commitment to international partnerships requires a joint institutional adherence to and respect for different legal frameworks. For example, when accrediting training courses to different national standards. This commitment also requires that initiatives are relevant to both sides of an international partnership to ensure all stakeholders contribute as well as recognize the benefits. Partnerships must also be operational where there are technological differences between countries and communications challenges, e.g., where internet connectivity is unreliable or limited.

Addressing these challenges requires careful planning involving all stakeholders and the capacity to pivot to deal with unforeseen issues. Many of the common challenges in creating international partnerships and integrating global citizenship education were discussed in the UNEVOC Network workshop initiated by SNPU in May 2023.

Conclusions and next steps

Shaanxi Polytechnic University has a long-term commitment to continue developing global connections with TVET institutions as well as building the global competence of its students. It will remain a part of the strategic goals of SNPU to secure ongoing financial and administrative support. The effectiveness of the programme will be continuously reviewed based on evaluative feedback. Teachers will be trained and curriculum developed to ensure it adapts to changing circumstances and global trends. As part of the UNEVOC Network SNPU will continue to promote and advocate for global education locally and internationally.

Learn more

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