

# Global Competence of Normal Undergraduates

Wanyan Sun

School of Education, East China Normal University, Shanghai 200062, China

**Abstract:** Global competence refers to individual's attitudes towards other cultures, basic knowledge level about the world, the competence to survive in a cultural-crossing environment and the role of citizens of the world. It has been increasingly significant nowadays, especially for children representing the future. Therefore, the global thinking patterns of prospective teachers who will teach future children should be valued. However, the current situation of normal undergraduates' global competence is worrying. Hence, the global competence of prospective teachers should be enhanced without hesitation. Several ways have been put forward while some disadvantages still exist.

**Keywords:** Global competence; Normal undergraduate; Prospective teacher

**Publication date:** August, 2020

**Publication online:** 31 August, 2020

**\*Corresponding author:** Wanyan Sun, 10174508146@stu.ecnu.edu.cn

## 1 The definition of global competence

The theory basis of personal global competence is intercultural sensitivity proposed by Bennett in 1993<sup>[1]</sup>. According to this theory, global competence can be divided into three independent parts:

Firstly, students should hold an active attitude towards other cultures. This was also discovered by Sue in 1982<sup>[2]</sup>. In 2009, Reimers argues that individuals' acceptance of initial confusion and uncertainty towards foreign heritages also plays a significant role in the attitudes towards other cultures<sup>[3]</sup>.

Secondly, students should grasp basic knowledge about the world. It is found by Deardorff (2006) that familiarity with food, greeting customs and culture heritages beyond traditional level is extremely important<sup>[4]</sup>. Also, students are required to gain a thorough understanding of important global topics like

health problems, sustainability, military conflicts and economic development.

Thirdly, students are required to show a set of indispensable competences which would support them to survive in a cultural-crossing environment. As is illustrated by Lynn(2017), communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, resilience and problem-solving skills can be included<sup>[5]</sup>.

Additionally, it was proposed by Mansilla in 2013 that the role of citizens of the world should be nurtured and students are recommended to take initiatives to contribute to the planet<sup>[6]</sup>. The willingness to take actions to alter the world for the better is an innovative perspective towards global competence.

## 2 The significance of global competence

In the past, the perspective that global competence only plays roles when it comes to wealthy people is really prevalent. Nevertheless, under no circumstances would this notion work now. Future puts forward new challenges and requirements for children.

According to the popular notion of future-orientation learning, it is increasingly significant for teacher education to reflect on the competence required nowadays and that needed in the future. Not only should children be accustomed to rapidly-developed technology, but they also should learn to survive in the globally connected world in the next 20 years. We all need to live in the world and none of us would be immune to the irreversible trend of globalization. Also, it is youth that is held responsible for the creation of the future. Even though we may not make precise predictions about what the future would be like, we still could predict certain knowledge and global competence that we need to nurture our youth facing future challenges. It has been found by Meng (2018) that global competence could improve the social and academic adaptation of students<sup>[7]</sup>.

Additionally, we could not ignore the favorable

impact of global thinking patterns on teacher education. It has been mentioned by Lynn (2017) that we should “get the fish out of the water”. This also answers the question: what we can learn from other countries. On account of the familiarity with our school and the whole teaching circumstances, we are gradually getting accustomed to them instead of asking questions about the reason for them. Then it comes to the advantages of global thinking patterns. When we are exposed to diverse cultures and various teaching methods from different countries, we tend to realize and discover the irrational and unreasonable elements in our teaching system. Furthermore, we may even learn great experience from others instead of just copying it.

To conclude, from children’s and teacher education’s perspectives, it is really important for prospective teachers to cultivate their own global competence.

### **3 The current situation of normal undergraduates’ global competence**

According to the project demonstrated by Lynn (2017), even though 80% of teachers applaud that we should instruct our students to learn from other cultures, only 22% really take initiatives to prioritize global education<sup>[8]</sup>. It is a similar situation to normal students in our country. This can be explained by the theory called Knowledge Attitude/Belief and Practice (KABP). It is found in the medical field that an individual who knows the importance of one behavior may not take relative actions to some extent<sup>[9]</sup>.

Furthermore, the understanding of global competence or thinking patterns from various people can be really different. Not everyone really knows the connotation of global thinking patterns. For example in one academic conversation in East China Normal University, scholars talked about the international preschool in Shanghai. Some students tended to perceive the school where students speak English and eat western food as a great place for students to nurture global competence. Admittedly, this is a part of global competence but not all. Under no circumstances should we consider copying lifestyles from western countries as a sign of global thinking patterns.

Moreover, the nurture of global competence in universities is worrying. First and foremost, according to the study of Li in 2013, most of the efforts towards university internationalization are to some extent scattered and ineffective<sup>[10]</sup>. In 2006, Shams argued that various terminologies have been applied in diverse occasions such as “global competence”, “global mindset”, “international cultural competence”, to

name a few<sup>[11]</sup>. Therefore, there is a high possibility that actions taken by college campuses are fragmented and lack clear focus<sup>[12]</sup>. Secondly, teachers themselves have not developed a deepened understanding of diverse countries. It was demonstrated in 2000, that only 25% of American teachers had taken Asia-related courses, needless to say countries in Africa<sup>[13]</sup>. This is also a similar situation in China. Most students’ global knowledge is about developed countries instead of developing countries. Thirdly, attention towards international topics such as global warming and air contamination is relatively low. This has been revealed by a study conducted in China in 2010<sup>[14]</sup>. Even though this research subject is not a normal student, we can still learn the current situation which is worth apprehension.

### **4 The way to strengthen prospective teachers’ global competence**

As can be revealed in the studies above, the problem should be solved with an urgent approach. Following potential ways have been found but some disadvantages still exist.

First and foremost, the exposure towards the global world can exert a far-reaching impact on normal students’ global competence. Once employees conduct a global assignment, they have the tendency to be more sensitive towards another culture. That is to say, they know what they don’t know<sup>[15]</sup>. For one thing, normal students can be encouraged to interact with foreign children and even give lessons to them in the community. This can be called globalization in the community according to Lynn (2017). For another, normal colleges or universities should support prospective teachers to pursue academic achievement overseas. With realistic exposure towards foreign cultures, students can construct their own critical opinion about the world instead of hearing from others. There are also two problems with studying abroad. The first problem is the high expenses. Secondly, whether it is rational for us to call studying only in developed western countries as globalization is a problem.

Secondly, the ability to use the Internet boosts the cultivation of global competence<sup>[12]</sup>. For one thing, online courses saved in cyberspace can be utilized. For example, the open Internet courses created by National Peace Corps Association or “World Links for Development” supported by the World Bank are two valuable sources about global thinking patterns<sup>[16]</sup>. For another, students from diverse cultural backgrounds can cooperate together with online technology. Based on the Group Contact theory proposed by Erickson

(2000)<sup>[17]</sup>, an international task has been created. In the task, American students and Chinese students worked together on hot global topics. After the international task lasting for a term, the global competence of students was significantly heightened. It means international related online courses work to some extent<sup>[8]</sup>.

Thirdly, the global curriculum can be a great approach. It has been illustrated in 2017 by Zhou Xiaoyong that almost every course can take the responsibility of nurturing global competence<sup>[18]</sup>. Without foreign students, native students could still improve their global thinking patterns by global-oriented curriculum. For one thing, by focusing on global hot topics, students exert their great lengths to pursuing solutions to some international problems. Compared with memorizing global knowledge, they are aimed to achieve realistic solutions and desire to alter the world for the better<sup>[19]</sup>. For another, infusing courses with some international content like global research or faculty is another way of global competence cultivation<sup>[20-21]</sup>.

Fourthly, under no circumstances should we ignore the significance of English. According to the research by Lohmann in 2008, English skill has been one of the key components of global competence for a long time<sup>[18]</sup>. Hence, the English skill of normal students who will not be English teachers is extremely significant.

Finally, a global competence assessment system should be constructed. In order to enhance global competence of students, the Malaysian government takes initiatives to create a relating evaluating system for students which works really well<sup>[22]</sup>. However, as can be found by Sälzer(2018), more obstacles may be confronted when teachers are assessing global competence<sup>[23]</sup>. For example, in PISA 2018, there is one question: who do you think will be late for the party? Students have to choose the country's identity from the choices. Ironically, numerous participants complained about the stereotype hiding behind this question. It has aroused our thinking about global stereotypes when we are nurturing global competence.

## 5 Conclusion

To conclude, even though several suggestions have been studied to heighten individuals' global competence, problems of them cannot be neglected. More attention should be paid to the nurture of prospective teachers' global competence in the future.

## References

[1] Bennett M J. Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model

- of intercultural sensitivity[J]. *Education for the intercultural experience*, 1993, 2: 21-71.
- [2] Sue DW, Bernier JE, Durran A, et al. Position paper: Cross-cultural counseling competencies[J]. *The counseling psychologist*, 1982, 10(2): 45-52.
- [3] Reimers F. 14 Educating for Global Competency[J]. *International perspectives on the goals of universal basic and secondary education*, 2009, 22: 183.
- [4] Deardorff D K. Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization[J]. *Journal of studies in international education*, 2006, 10(3): 241-266.
- [5] Paine, L., Aydarova, E., & Syahril, I. (2017). Globalization and teacher education. *Handbook of research on teacher education*, 2.
- [6] Mansilla V B, Jackson A, Jacobs I H. Educating for global competence: Learning redefined for an interconnected world[J]. *Mastering Global Literacy (5-27)*. New York: Solution Tree, 2013.
- [7] Meng Q, Zhu C, Cao C. Chinese international students' social connectedness, social and academic adaptation: The mediating role of global competence[J]. *Higher Education*, 2018, 75(1): 131-147.
- [8] Paine, L. (2017). Alternative Framing of Teacher Education: A Challenge for Teacher Education in an Age of Globalization. In *Quality of Teacher Education and Learning* (pp. 85-98). Springer, Singapore.
- [9] Fishbein M, Trafimow D, Francis C, et al. AIDS Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices (KABP) in Two Caribbean Countries: A Comparative Analysis 1[J]. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 1993, 23(9): 687-702.
- [10] Li Y. Cultivating student global competence: A pilot experimental study[J]. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, 2013, 11(1): 125-143.
- [11] Shams A, George C. Global competency: An interdisciplinary approach[J]. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 2006, 10(4): 249-257.
- [12] Hunter B, White G P, Godbey G C. What does it mean to be globally competent?[J]. *Journal of Studies in International education*, 2006, 10(3): 267-285.
- [13] Barker C M. Education for international understanding and global competence[C]//Carnegie Corporation Convention New York. 2000.
- [14] Fang Q. Research on The Current Situation of College Students' Network Literacy and Global Consciousness [D]. Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, 2010.
- [15] Caligiuri P, Santo V D. Global competence: what is it, and can it be developed through global assignments?[J]. *Human Resource Planning*, 2001, 24(3).
- [16] Barker C M. Education for international understanding and global competence[C]//Carnegie Corporation Convention New York. 2000.
- [17] Erickson J A, O'Connor S E. Service-learning: Does it promote or reduce prejudice[J]. *Integrating service learning and multicultural education in colleges and universities*, 2000: 59-70.
- [18] Zhou XY. Globalization era calls for global literacy education[J]. *Global Education Outlook*, 2017, 46(9): 25-36.
- [19] Mansilla V B, Jackson A, Jacobs I H. Educating for global competence: Learning redefined for an interconnected world[J]. *Mastering Global Literacy (5-27)*. New York: Solution Tree, 2013.
- [20] Mestenhauser J A. Portraits of an international curriculum: An

- uncommon multidimensional perspective[J]. Reforming the higher education curriculum: Internationalizing the campus, 1998: 3-39.
- [21] Ellingboe B. Internationalizing the private liberal arts college: A comparative fivecollege study[D]. PhD Dissertation. University of Minnesota, 1999.
- [22] Sidhu G K, Kaur S. Enhancing global competence in higher education: Malaysia's strategic initiatives[M]//Higher education in the Asia-Pacific. Springer, Dordrecht, 2011: 219-236.
- [23] Sälzer C, Roczen N. Assessing Global Competence in PISA 2018: Challenges and Approaches to Capturing a Complex Construct[J]. International journal of development education and global learning, 2018, 10(1): 5-20.