

The Global Citizenship Education in China: Policy Framework and Practice Paths

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China's policy framework for global citizenship education (GCE) is built around the core logic of **"top-level strategic guidance, inter-sectoral coordination, local innovative implementation, and alignment with international agendas"**. It forms a multi-level, systematic structure covering national strategies, sectoral or ministerial regulations, local plans, and international cooperation. Anchored in national goals such as *"building an education powerhouse"* and *"forging a community with a shared future for mankind"*, the framework deeply aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). Through a closed loop of **"policy design - resource guarantee - practice promotion - effect evaluation"**, it ensures the transformation of GCE from concept to concrete action. Specifically, it consists of the following five core levels:

I. Top-Level Strategic Design: National Plans Define GCE Direction

Top-level policies serve as the "compass" for China's GCE, clarifying its strategic positioning, core goals, and implementation paths through national-level plans, and integrating GCE into the overall national development agenda.

1.1 Guidance from Core Strategic Documents

- **The Outline for Building an Education Powerhouse (2024—2035)** (hereinafter referred to as "the Outline") is the core guiding document. It explicitly proposes "actively participating in global education governance" and identifies "cultivating citizens' literacy with a global perspective" as a key component of building an education powerhouse. It also outlines seven implementation paths that directly support GCE:

- Deepening cooperation with international organizations such as UNESCO, and transforming China's experiences in education-based poverty alleviation and digital education into "global public goods" (e.g., promoting the rural Community Learning Center (CLC) model led by UNESCO INRULED to developing countries);

- Establishing an "education innovation cooperation network" (e.g., the Belt and Road Education Exchange Alliance) to build and share global educational resources through digital means, providing platform support for GCE;

- Supporting the development of the International STEM Education Institute to cultivate "technological talents with both innovative capabilities and global responsibilities", echoing core GCE themes such as technological ethics and sustainable development;

- Implementing the "China Education Brand Cultivation Program" (e.g., advancing "Luban Workshop" and "Study in China") to convey China's GCE concepts through international vocational education and student exchanges.

- The Belt and Road Education Initiative since 2018: Taking "promoting cross-cultural understanding and fostering a sense of global responsibility" as its core

goals, it has promoted the establishment of over 150 Belt and Road Education Exchange Alliances in China by 2025, 113 of which were initiated by educational institutions. These alliances have become core carriers for universities to carry out international cooperation in GCE (e.g., the University Alliance of the Silk Road promoting student exchanges and joint scientific research to foster cross-cultural collaboration capabilities).

1.2 Localization of SDGs

At the national level, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is deeply integrated with domestic policies, clarifying the "issue anchors" for GCE:

- Aligning with SDG 4 (Quality Education): Taking "building a lifelong learning system for all" as the foundation of GCE, *China's Education Modernization 2035* proposes "expanding access to high-quality educational resources and improving the quality of education in rural and remote areas", laying the groundwork for rural residents to participate in GCE;

- Aligning with SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 13 (Climate Action): *The Rural Revitalization Strategy Plan* explicitly includes content such as "education for rural sustainable development", "women's empowerment", and "green skills training", directly linking GCE to rural development needs (e.g., CLCs carrying out projects such as "ecological agriculture training" and "women's digital literacy improvement").

II. Inter-Ministerial Coordination Mechanism: Joint Efforts to Build Policy Implementation Momentum

China has established a working mechanism led by the Ministry of Education, coordinated by multiple ministries, and participated in by international organizations. This breaks down departmental barriers and shifts GCE policy from "single-department promotion" to "multi-dimensional coordination".

2.1 Division of Responsibilities Among Core Departments

- Ministry of Education: Responsible for "curriculum integration" and "school-based practice" of GCE. For example, integrating "international understanding education" and "global issues" into national basic education curricula (e.g., primary school science classes explaining "China's technology helping Africa alleviate poverty", and junior high school morality and rule of law classes interpreting "a community with a shared future for mankind"); promoting universities to set up majors related to "global governance" and "cross-cultural studies" to cultivate compound talents participating in global education governance.

- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs: Focusing on GCE in rural areas, taking "sustainable agriculture" and "rural ecological protection" as core content, and integrating concepts such as "global food security" and "climate action" through the "New Professional Farmer Training Program" (e.g., training farmers in "low-carbon planting technologies" and helping them understand their contribution to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)).

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Aligning with international agendas and promoting international cooperation in GCE. For example, supporting universities to carry out "online cultural exchanges" and "student exchanges" with Belt and Road countries through the "educational work of embassies and consulates abroad". The 2025 Conference on Educational Work of Embassies and Consulates Abroad explicitly stated "increasing innovation efforts to enhance the international influence of Chinese education", providing international exchange channels for GCE.

- Chinese National Commission for UNESCO: Coordinating the implementation of international resources and promoting GCE projects by UNESCO Category I and II institutions such as INRULED and the International STEM Education Institute (e.g., INRULED's "China-Thailand Rural Sustainable Development Leaders Network" and the International STEM Education Institute's "global STEM education ecosystem co-construction").

2.2 Case of Inter-Ministerial Coordination

- Linkage between "education-based poverty alleviation and global poverty reduction awareness cultivation": The Ministry of Education and the former State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development (now the National Administration for Rural Revitalization) jointly implemented the "Vocational Education Poverty Alleviation Program". It not only addresses employment for the rural poor (e.g., cross-border e-commerce training) but also integrates "China's poverty alleviation experiences and their global contributions" into the curriculum, helping rural residents understand the connection between "personal development—rural revitalization—global poverty reduction" and achieving dual improvement in "skills training" and "global citizenship awareness".

III. Core Policy Pillars: Focusing on Four Key Areas to Strengthen Practical Implementation

Centered on four cores—"fostering a global perspective, empowering through international cooperation, supporting local practices, and enhancing academic discourse"—the policy framework forms specific implementation pillars to ensure GCE is operable and implementable.

3.1 International Organization Cooperation: Building Multilateral Platforms for GCE

Policies explicitly "deepen cooperation with international organizations such as UNESCO", integrating China's GCE practices into the international framework through establishing international institutions in China and participating in global education governance:

- Supporting the development of UNESCO Category I and II institutions: For example, the International STEM Education Institute (UNESCO's first Category I institution in China) focuses on "inclusive and equitable STEM education", fostering students' "technological ethics" and "global problem-solving capabilities" through interdisciplinary teaching; INRULED (a UNESCO Category II institution), as the

"core carrier of rural GCE", has promoted the rural CLC model to 12 developing countries.

- Participating in the formulation of global education agendas: At the 2024 UNESCO High-Level Steering Committee Meeting on Education 2030, Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng proposed that "China is willing to work with all countries to promote education transformation", incorporating China's "rural GCE experiences" into the discussions on the global Education 2030 Agenda.

3.2 Education Innovation Network: Building a Global Resource Sharing Mechanism

Policies promote the "establishment of an education innovation cooperation network", breaking geographical limitations through "digitalization + in-depth cooperation" to provide resource support for GCE:

- Belt and Road Education Exchange Alliances: By 2025, over 150 alliance institutions in China have carried out "transnational curriculum cooperation" (e.g., Chinese and ASEAN universities co-offering online courses on "global rural development") and "teacher-student exchanges" (over 10,000 students participating in study tours in Belt and Road countries each year), fostering cross-cultural communication capabilities.

- Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) International Education Cooperation Zone: The Outline explicitly "establishes the RCEP International Education Cooperation Zone", promoting "synergistic development of education and economy" in the region through activities such as "Education Exchange Week" and "Higher Education Exhibition". For example, Guangxi has built 17 "China-ASEAN Modern Craftsman Colleges", integrating GCE concepts of "regional cooperation" and "cultural inclusiveness" while cultivating "cross-border technical talents".

3.3 Chinese Education Brands: Conveying Chinese Wisdom in GCE

Policies implement the "China Education Brand Cultivation Program", conveying China's GCE experiences through "going global" brands and avoiding "Western-centrism":

- "Luban Workshop": By 2025, 33 Luban Workshops have been established across Asia, Europe, and Africa. While teaching "technical skills", they integrate concepts of "sustainable development" and "gender equality" (e.g., offering "women's welding technology classes" in African Luban Workshops to enhance women's employability, echoing SDG 5 (Gender Equality)).

- "Study in China": Since 2018, China has become the "largest destination for international students in Asia". Policies support the development of the "Study in China" brand, enabling international students to understand the connection between China's "rural revitalization" and global sustainable development through "social practices" (e.g., organizing foreign students to participate in China's rural "ecological poverty alleviation" projects), making them global citizens for cross-cultural communication.

4. Enhancement of Academic Discourse: Building a Chinese-Characteristic GCE Theory

Policies emphasize "creating internationally influential academic journals, indices, and reports", breaking Western academic monopoly and providing Chinese theoretical support for GCE:

- Launching international academic public goods: **Such as East China Normal University Education Review (English), Global Digital Education Development Index, and China Smart Education Development Report**, which systematically summarize China's experiences in "rural GCE" and "education-based poverty alleviation". By 2025, relevant achievements have been included in UNESCO's "Global Citizenship Education Case Database".

- Supporting universities to establish education-related international organizations: Such as the University Alliance of the Silk Road and the World Digital Education Alliance, promoting "academic cooperation in GCE". In 2025, universities including Wenzhou University initiated the "Global Rural Citizenship Education Academic Forum", attracting scholars from 32 countries and forming an academic consensus on GCE that is "non-Western-centric".

IV. Local Policy Innovation: Regionally Characteristic Implementation of National Strategies

Local governments have "localized" national policies in light of regional endowments, forming a number of replicable and promotable GCE practice models, which reflect the flexibility and adaptability of the policy framework.

4.1 Eastern Regions: Focusing on "Integration of Internationalization and Digitalization"

- Zhejiang Province: Integrating "ecological citizenship literacy cultivation" into the "Ten-Thousand-Village Improvement Program", conveying SDG 13 (Climate Action) concepts through "rural environmental governance practices"; establishing a "citizenship education quality monitoring platform" to drive the improvement of "global perspective courses" through data. By 2025, monitoring shows that rural students' "awareness of global issues" has increased by 40% compared with 2020.

- Shanghai Municipality: Relying on the International STEM Education Institute, advancing "localized STEM education practices", organizing the "Global Youth Environmental Innovation Competition" in primary and secondary schools. Student teams design solutions for global issues such as "plastic pollution control" and "new energy application", and collaborate online with foreign students to foster "global problem-solving capabilities".

4.2. Central and Western Regions: Focusing on "Empowering Rural and Poverty-Alleviated Areas"

- Guizhou Province: Combining "education-based poverty alleviation" with "global poverty reduction awareness", offering courses on "China's Poverty Alleviation Stories and Global Responsibilities" in primary and secondary schools in poverty-alleviated areas. Through "Model United Nations (Rural Version)", rural

students debate on issues such as "rural education equity", covering over 500 rural schools by 2025.

- Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region: Based on its "frontier position in China-ASEAN cooperation", building 10 "China-ASEAN Technology Innovation Institutes". Through practices such as "ASEAN students interning in China" and "Chinese students conducting research in ASEAN", it carries out "cross-border agricultural cooperation" and "cultural heritage protection" to cultivate "regionally cooperative global citizens".

4.3 Hainan Free Trade Port: Exploring "Integration of Overseas-Sponsored Education and GCE"

As China's first independent university sponsored by a foreign institution, Hainan University of Applied Sciences Bielefeld doubled its enrollment to 280 students in 2025. Policies support it in offering courses such as "global sustainable development" and "cross-cultural management". By integrating "free trade port development" with "global issues" through "Chinese and foreign students jointly participating in Hainan ecological research", it has created a model of "overseas-sponsored education + GCE".

V. Guarantee Mechanisms: Funding, Evaluation, and Teacher Training Support Policy Implementation

To ensure the effective implementation of policies, the framework establishes three supporting mechanisms—funding guarantee, evaluation and monitoring, and teacher training—forming a closed loop of "policy—resources—effects".

5.1 Funding Guarantee: Special Funds Supporting GCE

- At the national level, a "special fund for global education cooperation" has been established to fund schools in carrying out "international exchanges" and "global issue practices" (e.g., selecting outstanding students to participate in the "International Science Olympiad" and "Global Youth Environmental Action" each year);

- Local governments provide supporting funds. For example, Guangdong Province has set up a "special fund for citizenship education credit system", incorporating "volunteer services" and "international exchanges" into credit recognition. In 2025, it invested over 100 million yuan to support rural schools in carrying out "low-cost international study tours" (e.g., "online twinning" with Southeast Asian schools).

5.2 Evaluation and Monitoring: Establishing a Diversified Effect Evaluation System

- Process evaluation: Policies promote the construction of "citizenship education quality monitoring platforms" (e.g., Zhejiang Province), dynamically monitoring GCE effects through indicators such as "students' global issue awareness tests", "cross-cultural communication capability assessments", and "quantification of community service outcomes";

- International benchmarking: Developing a "China Global Citizenship Literacy Assessment Index" with reference to the OECD *Digital Citizenship Framework*,

covering three dimensions—"global perspective", "international collaboration", and "sustainable development awareness". It was piloted in 10 provinces in 2025 to provide data support for policy optimization.

5.3 Teacher Training: Enhancing Teachers' GCE Capabilities

- Special training: The Ministry of Education implemented the "Global Citizenship Education Teacher Training Program", training over 50,000 rural teachers and STEM teachers from 2024 to 2025, covering content such as "international understanding education curriculum design" and "cross-cultural teaching methods";

- International exchanges: Supporting teachers to participate in UNESCO's "global education governance training" and "overseas teaching seminars". For example, INRULED organized CLC teachers to exchange visits to Thailand and Ethiopia, learning "community self-organization" experiences to enhance their "localization + globalization" teaching capabilities.

Conclusion: Core Characteristics of China's GCE Policy Framework

China's GCE policy framework, with **"national strategies as guidance, inter-ministerial coordination as support, local innovation as vitality, and international cooperation as a link"**, presents three distinct characteristics:

1. Integration of Local and Global Perspectives: Based on local needs such as "rural revitalization" and "education equity", it also aligns with international agendas such as SDGs and global education governance, avoiding "detached education";

2. Integration of Practice and Concepts: Through specific carriers such as "rural community learning centers", "Luban Workshop", and "STEM education", it transforms "global citizenship awareness" into operable practices (e.g., skills training, community services);

3. Balance of Openness and Independence: While actively participating in global education governance and sharing Chinese experiences, it adheres to a "non-Western-centric" path, providing diverse options for GCE through enhanced academic discourse and brand cultivation.

This policy framework not only provides a clear path for China's GCE but also offers a replicable "Chinese solution" for developing countries to carry out GCE through "South-South cooperation" and "equal mutual learning".