Outline

1. Introduction to UNESCO’s Collaborative Research on Transversal Skills in Asia-Pacific
2. Research Background
3. Research Methodology
4. Research Limitations
5. ERI-Net Working Definition of Transversal Skills
6. Classification of Transversal Skills in the Regional Research on TVET
7. Transversal Skills Most Commonly Found in Polices and Curricula
8. Rationale for Integrating Transversal Skills into Education and Training
9. Modes of Integrating Transversal Skills into the Curriculum
10. Types of Challenges in Integrating Transversal Skills in Policies and Practice
11. Findings and Policy Recommendations
12. Next Steps
Introduction to UNESCO’s Collaborative Research on Transversal Skills in Asia-Pacific

1. Australia
2. Shanghai, China
3. Hong Kong (SAR)
4. India
5. Republic of Korea
6. Japan
7. Malaysia
8. Mongolia
9. Philippines
10. Thailand

1. Australia
2. Bangladesh
3. Brunei Darussalam
4. Cambodia
5. China
6. Indonesia
7. Japan
8. Malaysia
9. Mongolia
10. Sri Lanka
11. Thailand
12. Viet Nam
Research background

Growing debate on the importance of transversal skills

**International initiatives**
- Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills [ATC21S],
- Partnership for 21st century skills [P21]

Existing studies mainly focus on the West

**Education reforms in the Asia-Pacific region introducing transversal skills**
- Australia: ‘general capabilities’/ ‘employability skills’
- Thailand, Brunei: ‘life skills’
- Japan: ‘zest for living’

These movements are not widely documented and shared

The regional research to collect and document perspectives and insights from the region
Research methodology

Given the diversity of education and training systems - flexible approach

1) Country reports
   - Document analysis (Ed policies, curriculum guidelines)
   - Interviews (policy makers)
   - Survey questionnaires

3) Regional synthesis report
   - Skills mapping
   - Similarities and diversities in skills and competencies
Research Limitations

1. Limited geographic coverage
2. Gaps between policies and practices
3. The use of diverse concepts and terms to describe transversal skills
## ERI-Net Working Definition of Transversal Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Examples of Key Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical and innovative thinking</td>
<td>Creativity, entrepreneurship, resourcefulness, application skills, reflective thinking, reasoned decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-personal skills</td>
<td>Presentation and communication skills, leadership, organizational skills, teamwork, collaboration, initiative, sociability, collegiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intra-personal skills</td>
<td>Self-discipline, enthusiasm, perseverance, self-motivation, compassion, integrity, commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global citizenship</td>
<td>Awareness, tolerance, openness, respect for diversity, intercultural understanding, ability to resolve conflicts, civic/political participation, conflict resolution, respect for the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional domain: (Example) Physical and psychological health</td>
<td>Healthy lifestyle, healthy feeding, physical fitness, empathy, self-respect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several terms used to refer to non-academic skills

Terms used interchangeably but their respective focus tends to differ.

Classification of Transversal Skills in the Regional Research on TVET

One possible categorisation of some common terms used to refer to transversal skills:
Transversal Skills Most Commonly Referred to in Policies and Curricula of TVET Study

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Problem-Solving
- Entrepreneurship
- Learning to Learn
Rationale for Integrating Transversal Skills into Education and Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Economic Discourse</th>
<th>Social Discourse</th>
<th>Humanity Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global Perspective</strong></td>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
<td>Understanding &amp; Peace</td>
<td>Global Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Perspective</strong></td>
<td>GDP Growth</td>
<td>HDI Growth</td>
<td>Patriotism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Perspective</strong></td>
<td>Employability</td>
<td>Community/Harmony</td>
<td>Moral Formation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modes of Integrating Transversal Skills into the Curriculum

- **Specific Subject**: included as a well-defined entity within the formal curriculum, for example, a subject with specific goals and syllabuses for formal teaching;

- **Cross Subject**: runs across, infiltrates and/or underpins all “vertical subjects”, i.e. traditional school subjects.

- **Extra-Curricular**: is made part of school life and embedded purposefully in all types of non-classroom activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country and economy</th>
<th>Specific Subject</th>
<th>Cross Subject</th>
<th>Extra-Curricular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong (China)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Shanghai (China)</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Types of Challenges in Integrating Transversal Skills in Policies and Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitional</th>
<th>Operational</th>
<th>Systematic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity in scope of transversal competencies</td>
<td>Lack of assessment mechanisms</td>
<td>Large class size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity in the desired outcomes of the teaching of transversal</td>
<td>Insufficient teaching/learning materials and teaching guides</td>
<td>Overloaded curricula</td>
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<tr>
<td>competencies</td>
<td>Lack of incentives</td>
<td>Pressure to achieve academic success</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Insufficient capacity of teachers</td>
<td>Inconsistency with high-stake exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of budget (policy-budget inconsistency)</td>
<td>Lack of understanding among parents and other stakeholders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Additional burden on teachers</td>
<td>Overall school/community culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is a ‘ping-pong game’ among teachers responsible for VBC. For example, Korean language teachers insist that communication skills for work should be taught by ‘job-specific’ teachers because they are related to the workplace, while job specific teachers argue that Korean language teachers should focus on these skills as they are mainly related to language skills.
The acquisition of transversal competencies is relevant to all learners, regardless of the development status of the country and economy and level of education.

Governments should place transversal competencies at the heart of the education policy agenda for coherence and consistency.

Teachers must be better prepared and rewarded for their work in the integration of transversal competencies into the classroom.

Awareness and understanding of transversal competencies among key stakeholders must be promoted.
Policy Recommendations from TVET Study

- A clear definition and guidance on transversal skills in TVET at the policy level will facilitate implementation.

- TVET teacher capacities need to be developed through pre- and in-service training, as well as out-of-school training and retraining opportunities.

- Transversal skills need to form an integral part of national TVET curricula that are developed through an integrative effort between general and vocational teachers.

- Context-specific ways of measuring transferable skills in TVET need to be developed.
Qualities Not Measured by Most Tests

Persistence
Curiosity
Enthusiasm
COURAGE
Leadership
Creativity
Civic-Minded
Resourcefulness
Self-Discipline
Sense of Wonder

Big-Picture Thinking
Compassion
Reliability
Motivation
Humor
Empathy
Sense of Beauty
Humility
Resilience

Sense of Wonder
Objectives:

- Collect and analyze best practices of nurturing transversal skill at school, particularly through pedagogies and assessment, from selected countries in the region;

- Identify emerging trends, current practices and bottlenecks of integrating transversal competencies in teaching;

- Facilitate experience-sharing and build a knowledge-base on the integration of transversal competencies in education to support evidence-based policy making and implementation.

Next Steps: Research on Transversal Skills in Asia-Pacific

1. ERI-Net Study (Phase II)
2. Study on Transversal Skills in TVET: Focus on Pedagogies and Assessment in the Asia-Pacific
Objectives:

• Promote policy debates and dialogues on skills development for the future

• Strengthen the link between TVET and the labour market focus on coordination among ministries in charge of TVET, as well as involvement of the private sector

Thematic areas:

• Skills development through the labour market perspective

• TVET for green jobs and a knowledge society through stronger collaboration between education, training and business sectors in the Asia-Pacific

• Harnessing technology to increase relevance and access of teaching and learning in TVET
Thank you for your attention!

For more information on UNESCO Office in Bangkok, please visit:

http://www.unescobkk.org/

For more information on ERI-Net, please visit:

http://www.unescobkk.org/education/epr/epr-partnerships/eri-net/