Teachers for Global Competences

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Abstract

All educational pursuits are meaningful if relevant to the times. The present scenario requires citizens who are not just professionally equipped but also globally competent. While the thrust of education hitherto has been to develop professional acumen in individuals, there needs to be a focus on the global competencies of individuals. Educational institutions have a responsibility to develop future citizens who have an understanding of global issues as well as zeal to shape a better world through positive action. It is therefore imperative to prepare teachers who are well-equipped with the skills and competencies for the development of global consciousness among learners. Teacher preparation courses ought to consciously include curricular and co-curricular aspects that would empower future teachers to prepare globally competent world citizens. Student teachers would need to be equipped with a strong conceptual understanding of global consciousness and competence as well as an attitude of stewardship to take global initiatives. The paper deals with the necessary elements that need to be focussed upon in order to build a community of teachers who are locally grounded and globally committed.

Keywords: Global competence; Student teachers; Teacher preparation

The world dynamics keep changing due to rapidly evolving human populace and growing interdependence among nations. Every era demands skills and competencies that are required for the progress and sustenance at that point in time. In the present context, with globalization fast spreading its wings, the skills and competencies required of individuals are different and broader in scope. For existence and sustenance in a global society, individuals would need to understand what it is to be a global citizen as well as realize their responsibilities towards global culture. Future
citizens are shaped in classrooms. Therefore the onus of preparing world citizens lies in the hands of teachers. However, only a lit candle can light another one. Only a teacher with global competencies can develop the same in his/her learners, as attitudes and values are caught rather than taught. It is therefore imperative to ensure that teachers are equipped with the theory and practice of global competencies.

**Concept of Global Competence:**

There is no conclusive definition so far about global competence. It has been given various connotations by different groups of people across the world. The Stanley Foundation (2003), which supports research pertaining to global education, considers global competency to include “an appreciation of complexity, conflict management, the inevitability of change, and the interconnectedness between and among humans and their environment. Globally competent citizens know they have an impact on the world and that the world influences them. They recognize their ability and responsibility to make choices that affect the future.” Hunter (2004) defined it as “Having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside one’s environment.”

Olson and Kroeger (2001) defined a globally competent person as “one who has enough substantial knowledge, perceptual understanding, and intercultural communication skills to interact effectively in our globally interdependent world”. Curran (2003) considered global competence to mean a developed appreciation of other cultures and the ability to interact with people from foreign lands. Curran suggested that global competence is the ability to become familiar with an environment, not causing a rift while experiencing something new, and reflection upon the experience at its completion. Still other researchers and practitioners have suggested that skills such as cultural awareness, willingness to communicate, ability to develop social relationships, and ability to resolve conflicts are the core of global competence.

According to William Brustein, director of the University Center for International Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, global competence is defined as “the ability to communicate effectively across cultural and linguistic boundaries and to focus on issues that transcend cultures and continents” (2003). The dimensions cited contributing to global competence as:

- the ability to work effectively in different international settings,
- an awareness of the major currents of global change and the issues arising from such changes,
- knowledge of global organizations and business activities,
- the capacity for effective communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries, and
- a personal adaptability to diverse cultures.
Global competence can thus be considered as an aggregation of the knowledge, attitude and skills required to live in harmony on the globe and function towards sustainable development. It is the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance. It could be understood as the level of interest among individuals in global concerns that gets translated into proactive measures to develop greater insights into the dynamics of the globe and to take relevant, focused action on issues related to the same.

**Why Global Competence?**

While Globalization has been cited as the main rationale for global competence among citizens of the world, there are other major global issues and concerns that necessitate a generation that not only understand but also take proactive roles to counter them. Endeavours ought to be in the direction of developing global citizens who can think critically and analytically on global issues and think about creative and original solutions for the same. Some of the interdependent factors that necessitate the development of global competences are as follows:

a) **A Flattened Globe:** Distance between countries has been reduced phenomenally due to increased technological devices. This has resulted in a flattened globe. The dynamics of the world economy demands a sharing of expertise across nations and borders. The world seeks competence in its various sectors of economy, irrespective of nationality. There is demand for high level quality expertise, irrespective of from ‘where it comes’. In such a scenario, there is mobility of people from one country to the other to satisfy the demand for intellect and competence. The nature of workforce needed now and in the future is quite different from what was needed a few years ago.

b) **Global Migration:** The flattening of the globe has resulted in greater demand for globally competent work and this has in turn led to unprecedented global migration. Migrants would need the attitude to understand the global set up and the dynamics therein. They would need international skills, multicultural awareness, sensitivity to varying perspectives and global understanding. Migration entails co-existence of multiple cultures and multiple perspectives that stem from their respective social context. Hence global citizens would need the right competencies and attitude to thrive in a different country and in a different socio-political set up.

c) **Climatic instability and the need for environmental stewardship:** The globe is experiencing tremendous implications of disharmony in environment. This has become a primary concern across nations as environmental changes pose grave problems to human sustenance and progress. Climatic changes cause corresponding changes to the vegetation and animal life thus consequently affecting human life and existence of the planet in general. The globe requires citizens who can take proactive measures to understand the environment and
take focused actions to salvage the situation. They ought to be environmental stewards who would take initiatives to restore harmony in nature.

**Rationale for global competence among teachers:**

Teachers influence students directly by words and actions. The attitude of a teacher that gets manifested in behaviour, teaches and educates more than the subjects. Hence if we want to groom students to be future global citizens, it is essential that we pay more attention to the most significant other in a learner’s life namely the teacher. Institutions of teacher education would need to review the curriculum in the light of the requirements of global citizenship. A teacher who cannot rise beyond the narrow boundaries of religion, culture, region and nation, will not be able to influence learners positively. Future teachers would therefore need to be globally competent themselves and be well versed with the content and strategies for global competence.

Teachers of the future need to possess clear understanding of the concept of global competencies in order to inculcate the same in the students. Teachers would also need to know, besides the content, the strategies that would help in effective transaction of the content matter to effect global competence among school children. Teacher training should focus on developing a multicultural perspective and an attitude of openness and inclusiveness in student teachers. Multidisciplinary, constructivist and collaborative approaches should be mainly emphasized in teacher training programmes in order to enable and empower future teachers to develop global competence among learners.

Global considerations are dynamic and always need to be updated and re-contextualized. Therefore teachers would need to possess research skills to know the contemporary trends in global competencies. The concept of global competence would need to evolve with the times, hence the need for research. Student population also would not remain the same; hence the approaches to the development of global competencies would need to be modified as per the needs of the time. Research in areas of theory and approaches to global competence is the need of the hour. Hence teacher education needs to focus on the development of research skills among future teachers, in order to develop effective and efficient practices for global consciousness.

To help students become globally competent, teachers must have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions described above, as well as:

• Knowledge of the international dimensions of their subject matter and a range of global issues
• Pedagogical skills to teach their students to analyze primary sources from around the world, appreciate multiple points of view, and recognize stereotyping
• A commitment to assisting students to become responsible citizens both of the world and of their own communities.
It follows that training teachers for the global age also requires that teacher educators, who are preparing future teachers in our colleges and universities, need to develop the capacities noted above as well as the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help teacher candidates acquire them.

Preparing teachers for Global Competencies:

First and foremost consideration for preparing teachers to be well equipped in inculcating global competencies among learners is an understanding of the traits that make up a globally competent learner. This understanding would provide direction to the entire process of developing globally competent individuals.

Characteristics of a globally competent learner
A transnational management consulting firm, the Swiss Consulting Group, in its Global Competency Report 2002, defined the skills one must possess to be globally competent as: intercultural facility, effective two-way communication, diverse leadership, systematic best practice sharing, and a truly global strategy design process.

In a related study, twenty-three community college officials and representatives of government agencies met at a conference convened in 1996 by the Stanley Foundation and the American Council on International Intercultural Education (ACIIE). The conference, titled ‘Educating for the Global Community: A Framework for Community Colleges’, defined the term “globally competent learner” as one who is “able to understand the interconnectedness of peoples and systems, to have a general knowledge of history and world events, to accept and cope with the existence of different cultural values and attitudes and, indeed, to celebrate the richness and benefits of this diversity”

A globally competent learner has:

- Knowledge of and curiosity about the world’s history, geography, cultures, environmental and economic systems, and current international issues; is aware of diversity, commonalities, as well as geopolitical and economic interdependence.
- Language and cross-cultural skills to communicate effectively with people from other countries, understand multiple perspectives, and use primary sources from around the globe; collaborative skills that would enable to have fruitful and meaningful interactions with people irrespective of their cultural and socio-political contexts.
- An attitude of commitment to global, lifelong learning; to ethical citizenship based on an understanding and appreciation of the non-universality of culture, religion, and values.

A globally competent student unlike any other student would have to be able to do the following:

- Investigate and inquire about the world i.e.
- Identify and analyze world issues to draw out the local and global significance and implications of the issue.
- Collect authentic evidence/s related to the issue/s using multiple human and material resources that transcend boundaries.

- Collaborative functioning and recognizing perspectives i.e.
  - Work on the issue/s with cooperation and collaboration.
  - Gather points of view and recognize varying perspectives.
  - Understand the social, economic, cultural and political contexts of the perspective/s.
  - Reflect on the perspectives for greater understanding of global dynamics.

- Communicate ideas using multiple modes and diverse audiences i.e.
  - Synthesize ideas and plan to communicate according to the audience.
  - Recognize the context of the audience and plan communication suitably.
  - Select appropriate devices and media to communicate effectively.
  - Have an open and democratic attitude towards audience response / reaction.
  - Be a good listener too.

- Take contemplative focused social action individually or collaboratively--
  - Craft/develop/design programmes that would result in concrete action.
  - Act in a creative and ethical manner that helps in the harmonious development of society.
  - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the action.

**Approaches to develop global competencies**

All programmes / activities / strategies in a school should be devised in the light of the afore-mentioned competences. Student teachers ought to be trained in strategies and approaches that would equip them for developing global consciousness. Hence teacher education programmes should incorporate such strategies to enable the student teachers understand them effectively. There are many measures that need to be taken to develop global competence among the student-teachers. Some of them are as follows:

a) Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Approaches: Knowledge needs to be seen as an entirety as every subject influences another and completes it. Fragmentation of knowledge into subjects has resulted in acquisition of knowledge in isolation. Therefore understanding of concepts, contexts, processes and procedures is not holistic. Every event/phenomenon in History is influenced by the geographical set up of the place, the socio-economic context, the socio-political context, the scientific developments of that age and also the philosophical ideologies existing then. Thus it is essential that student-
teachers are made to see the threads liking the various disciplines and see the unity of the body of knowledge.

b) Multicultural Approach: Migration of students would entail working and co-existing with learners from different national affiliations. This would mean working in a conglomeration of cultures. Learners therefore would need to know and understand the cultural background of different nations, if they have to co-exist harmoniously. Co-existence would mean not only living with each other, but would mean working with others, fully understanding their behaviour from their cultural point of view and helping them to strive and thrive even as one looks after personal growth. Hence it means living and growing together. The strategies therefor in schools should be to encourage multicultural study and understanding. Student teachers would therefore need to be provided training in the use of multi-cultural approach in their teaching learning processes.

c) Investigative, Inquiry Approach: Multi-cultural and Multi-disciplinary Approaches should include strategies for inquiry and investigation. Unless learners get into the depths of issues / phenomena / concerns and critique about it, there cannot be true learning. Learning is not just about accumulating knowledge but transforming the acquired knowledge into deeper understanding. It is not just about surface learning; rather it includes wide learning and also deep learning. Learners need to be encouraged to do critical analysis of all knowledge and look at it from multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural perspectives. Only a teacher who is adept at inquiry and investigation would be able to develop the same in the learners. Hence teacher training courses would need to infuse this in their curricular.

d) Perspective Recognition Approach: A global citizen ought to understand that every individual has a perspective, that every individual has a right to have his/her perspective; that perspectives depend upon the socio-cultural and socio-political background of an individual and; that perspectives would differ from individual to individual. It is essential to enable learners to recognize perspectives and also understand them from the context of the individual. This would lead to a greater acceptance of individuals and would stimulate better collaboration among individuals thereby creating harmony.

e) Communicative Approach: Merely understanding issues / phenomena / events and keeping it to oneself is of no intellectual consequence. A culture of open sharing of knowledge, opinions, perspectives and critiques has to be encouraged among learners. Without such an approach, it would not be possible to build a body of knowledge that is based on thorough analysis of varying perspectives. Also it is not the product of knowledge that is important, but the process is of primary importance. It is the manner of social interaction, the degree of social intelligence, the tolerance for ambiguity, the acceptance of
individuals and their choices, that matter the most in communication on a
global platform. Hence opportunities should be provided for free sharing of
opinions and ideas as well as open discussions. An atmosphere of openness,
intellectual freedom, and democratic interactions should be promoted to make it conducive for development of social competence as well as to provide intellectual stimulation.

f) Contemplative Social Action Approach: It needs to be understood that
knowledge without action is mere platitude. If knowledge has to become
meaningful and purposeful, then it needs to be translated into action. The
action should not be an impulsive, thoughtless application of knowledge but
that which is guided by contemplative thought. As Schon has stated the
importance of Reflection in Action and Reflection on Action, every action
taken by the individual should be guided by reflection at every step. Learners
should be enlightened about the imperative nature of reflective action in the
present times. They should be motivated to transform their learning into
fruitful action. There needs to be self- monitoring of actions in order to ensure
that they are in tune with the requirements of the society.

The above mentioned approaches, in reality should not be treated in isolation. Rather
they are interconnected and one ought to lead to the other. The interconnectedness of
the approaches is shown diagrammatically in Fig.1.

![Diagram showing the interconnectedness of approaches](image)

**Fig. 1.** Interconnectedness of the Approaches to Global Competencies

As seen in the above figure, while interdisciplinary and multicultural approaches are
selected, it is the responsibility of the teacher to encourage the learners to recognize
variations in perspectives, communicate clearly with people about the global issues
and take suitable action that is an outcome of intensive reflection. The driving force
behind all the approaches ought to be inquiry and critical analysis rather than indoctrination.

Planning to teach for global competencies
Teachers can play a key role in the inculcation of global spirit. There are several ways in which a teacher could influence the development of knowledge, skills and attitude regarding global content. The requisite steps that teachers should take are as follows;

- Identify content that can lend to the development of global competencies – A teacher has to be on the look-out for content matter in their respective subjects that could well serve as spring boards leading to development of global skills. Opportunities existing either explicitly or implicitly in the content matter should be explored to dwell on global issues and phenomena.

- Frame objectives and learning outcomes for global competencies – Conscious efforts ought to be made to frame specific, measurable and realistic objectives and learning outcomes that cater to global competencies. Global consciousness of school teachers would be reflected in their objectives and goals of teaching a subject, hence student teachers should be effectively taught how to frame objectives related to global competences.

- Develop / Craft content – Subject content or curriculum of teacher education may not explicitly lend itself to global awareness. Teacher educators would need to develop or craft content that is related to global competencies. The content matter would need to be made multi-disciplinary as well as multi-cultural in nature and this would need concentrated efforts, greater insights and hard work.

- Identify strategies and activities to ensure the development of global competencies – Based on the objectives and the content matter, teacher educators would need to design strategies and activities that would engage student teachers actively in obtaining information, gathering perspectives, synthesizing knowledge, reflecting on the process and product and translating thought into social action. Activities ought to provide opportunities for critiquing, problem deciphering, problem solving, communication and collaboration.

- Plan assessment strategies – Formative assessment strategies should be adopted that would test the acquisition of global competencies. Constant and consistent monitoring of learners’ knowledge, skills and attitude would ensure focused movement towards the development of global competencies. The seriousness of the mission towards development of globally competent citizens would then be understood by the student teachers who would then in turn take it forth to their learners.

A teacher educator’s efforts and attitude towards the development of global competence, itself serves as a motivating factor for the student teachers. In order to develop Modules for Global Competencies student teachers could be trained in the use of various instructional designs most prominent among them being the ADDIE
Model for Instructional Design. The application of the ADDIE model for developing instructional packages for global competences is as follows;

- **Analyze** – Perform a learner analysis with reference to age, global skills, knowledge about global issues, socio-economic and socio-cultural background and also of the disposition of the learner. An analysis of the current socio-economic-political set-up would also be needed in order to design and craft suitable learning experiences. Analysis of the content would need to be done to check the possibilities and feasibility of infusing Global focus.

- **Design** – Based on the earlier analysis, the teacher would need to plan the content and activities for teaching as well as assessment. The plan of action that is geared towards the development of global competences, should consist of the following aspects;
  - Aim and Objectives of instruction that explicitly comprise of the global focus.
  - Choice of Content and content mapping to include global competences.
  - Choice of instructional strategies and approaches that would be Multi-disciplinary, Multi-cultural and evoking multiple perspectives.
  - Selection of co-curricular activities that would be complementary to the curricular content.
  - Selection of Assessment strategies that would be more formative in nature and continuous.

- **Develop** – The instructional package should now be developed and crafted as per the action plan designed at the earlier phase. The human and material resources needed for the development and successful implementation of the package should be identified and procured. The worksheets as well as time and space requirements should be effectively considered.

- **Implement** – The package developed can be implemented as designed and planned. Instruction and assessment strategies need to be implemented at this stage.

- **Evaluate** – The success of the package needs to be assessed in order to check its effectiveness and look for its strengths and weaknesses. Based on the evaluation of the package, it can be modified and refined further. This phase helps to review every earlier phase/s and to adopt measures to enhance the respective phase/s.

**Support from educational institutions**
Implementation of globally conscious programmes in any educational institution depends upon the encouragement and motivation provided by them to the teachers. Educational leaders ought to make concerted efforts to facilitate global oriented programmes. Hence the institutions need to ensure the following;
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- Develop a conscious commitment towards the development of global competencies that would percolate to all the employees of the institute. The institution needs to include global education as an integral component of the institution's mission statement to establish it as a priority for the college and its community.
- Review and revise accreditation criteria to acknowledge the importance of global competency.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive global education program that is holistic and inclusive.
- Allocate resources, including release time to faculty for research and development of curriculum, exchanges, and activities.
- Develop networking patterns between institutions and experts both local and global to enhance the global consciousness of the institute and to enrich its globally oriented content.
- Provide support and incentives for international initiatives, both on and off campus.

Conclusion:

The world today needs citizens that are locally and globally conscious and who would think of national as well as global welfare. Having a global attitude does not suffice the purpose of making a positive difference to the world dynamics. What needs to be focused upon is a holistic empowerment of student teachers with reference to the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of their personality, so that they in turn can positively influence their young learners. Conscious and deliberate efforts would serve the purpose of developing world citizens. Teacher preparation courses would need to gear the curriculum in this direction and incorporate not just the theory of global consciousness but the attitude and competencies to prepare global citizens who would be able to take on the world challenges. Policy makers too need to take cognizance of the significance of global competencies and develop policies that would ensure focused efforts in that direction by institutions, teachers as well as teacher educators.

References


