

# How Does Global Competency Look Like in Malaysian Teachers? Issues and Suggestions

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## Abstract

Global competencies have received attention for their important role in shaping global citizens who can compete on the world stage and contribute to the universal sustainability of a volatile, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. Teachers are facilitators in implementing global competencies among students and producing students who will become active global citizens. Hence, teachers first need to be equipped with full global competencies. However, discussions on the issue and suggestions to improve teachers' global competence are still limited and need further exploration. By reviewing the existing research on teacher's global competency in Malaysia, this concept paper aims to discuss the related issues and suggest suggestions for improving teachers' global competence in Malaysia. The methodology of this paper observing and analyzing already present information and related to abstract concepts or ideas. The major findings were three main issues discovered are limited studies on teachers' global competence, weaknesses in developing teachers' global competence programs, and deficiencies in integrating global elements in teaching and learning. The solutions to these issues are to increase the study of Malaysian teachers' global competence, strengthen the teacher global competence development program, and integrate global competence elements in teaching and learning. This discussion has implications for better understanding teachers' global competencies to the public. This concept paper will enlighten the authorities on the current issues related to global competency in Malaysian teachers and help the community understand the challenges of instilling global competence in education. Suggestions for improvements to strengthen the global competence of Malaysian teachers include multiplying teacher global competence studies, strengthening teacher global competence development programs, and integrating elements of global competence in education. Further studies can be conducted by first measuring the actual level of global competence among Malaysian teachers and then recommending professional development programs tailored to the real needs of teachers to integrate global elements in teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** Teacher Quality, Global Competence, Global Competence Of Teachers, Global Citizenship

### **Introduction**

The educational landscape of the 21st century emphasizes the dissemination of knowledge and the nurturing of global citizens equipped with critical thinking, collaboration skills, and intercultural understanding. In this dynamic environment, the quality of educators becomes very important as teachers act as facilitators in providing an effective environment for the development of students' global competencies. In this era of globalization, countries are interconnected, and children are growing up in an interrelated, diverse, and quickly changing world environment (Mansilla & Wilson, 2020). We can now connect with people from different countries regardless of place and distance.

The development of globalization sweeping the world also requires students to have global competencies Han & Zhu (2022) for their future. Education systems worldwide are beginning to focus on building the global competencies of teachers and students to ensure they can compete in this diverse and interconnected community (Yaacob et al., 2021). The development of the Industrial Revolution allows humans to connect in an international network to improve their professionalism further. This becomes a reality with the individual's global capability or global competence. Education is one of the leading platforms in seeding and developing global competence in Malaysians from a young age.

For some reason, identifying Malaysian teachers' global competence is essential. First, it allows the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) to identify gaps where professional development initiatives must be implemented. A study by Yaacob et al (2022) found that teachers themselves recognize the need for further training in integrating global perspectives into their teaching practice. Thus, a thorough assessment allows program structures to be developed to equip educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to nurture global competencies among their students effectively. Secondly, assessing teacher quality regarding global competence provides valuable insights into the efficacy of existing educational foundations and initiatives. This aligns with the Malaysian Education Development Pelan 2013-2025, which emphasizes the development of globally competent citizens (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).

The PISA 2018 Global Competence Assessment results state that Malaysian students have the lowest level of awareness about global issues, with a PISA index of 0.41, and are ranked 60<sup>th</sup> among the 64 countries participating in PISA (OECD, 2020). An investigation by Zakaria et al (2019) also found a high level of global knowledge among teacher education students and a modest level of acceptance of cultural diversity. Overall, the level of global competence among Malaysian students is uneven, which is high in some aspects and low in others. This is likely due to the need for more exposure to some global aspects of students. However, it can still be improved and increased again. The primary root cause of this situation needs to be identified first. One way to do this is by identifying the teachers' level of global competence.

This concept paper aims to discuss three issues and suggestions for improving the quality of Malaysian teachers from the aspect of global competence. The three issues are (a) limited studies on the global competence of teachers, (b) weaknesses in the development of teacher global competence programs, and (c) lack of integration of global elements in teaching and learning. The proposed improvements are (a) to strengthen the study of Malaysian teachers' global competence, (b) to strengthen the teacher's global competence

development program, and (c) to integrate global competence elements in teaching and learning.

### **Definition of Teacher Global Competence**

Abdul Mutalib et al (2023) outlined six main aspects of global competence: character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. OECD (2018) also states that global competence is the ability of individuals to collectively act as global citizens who are open-minded to cultural diversity, understand the different perspectives of each individual based on their respective backgrounds, and the ability to interact effectively with others of various cultures in achieving collective welfare to ensure sustainable development can be continued. Kopish (2016) emphasized that globally competent teachers can combine local will with challenges coming from every corner of the world and being able to live and work in a small school. However, they can develop the younger generation into an informed, bound, and globally competent global society. It can be concluded that the global competence of teachers is the ability of teachers to foster and form students who have pure values, appreciate and are open to cultural diversity, understand the existence of different perspectives, and can communicate and then collaborate with individuals with varying backgrounds in ensuring global sustainability.

### **Definition of Teacher Global Competence in The Malaysian Context**

Global competence in Malaysia can be defined as a summary of aspects such as moral values, respect for diversity, effective communication across cultures, and the ability to engage with global issues. This definition goes beyond mere language acquisition and includes a complex mix of cognitive, social, and emotional skills (Goh & Ooi, 2020). The definition of global competence in the Malaysian context is a person's ability to engage meaningfully with an interconnected world with a tolerant attitude towards cultural diversity through effective communication, having a critical awareness of one's own culture and other societies, having the ability to collaborate and become a proactive global citizen.

This definition reinforces the importance of developing global competencies in the Malaysian context and, at the same time, equipping individuals with the skills and perspectives needed to navigate the complexities of the world. By nurturing these competencies, Malaysia can empower its people to become active global players, i.e., capable of contributing meaningfully and effectively to a safer and more secure future.

### **The Role of Teachers in Developing Students' Global Competencies**

Global competence is becoming a necessity and is relevant to the development of the world of global education. In addition, it has already become part of the assessments assessed in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). Sokal and Parmigiani (2022) state that teachers are responsible for developing students' global competence. The government of Canada also recognizes the role of teachers in shaping global competence in students (Sinay & Graikins, 2018). These two studies show the role of teachers as those who have direct access to shape students according to the goals desired by the government.

### **Level of Global Competence of Teachers In Malaysia**

Education Act 1996 (Act 550) states that the country's education system is expected to be able to produce citizens who master the knowledge and skills and have the pure values needed to compete at the world level following the rapid development of science,

technology, and information. The National Curriculum 2027 also aims to build prosperous people; one of its characteristics is being able to compete globally. To ensure this goal is achieved, teachers must first have high global competence and be able to form the same abilities in students.

Zakaria et al (2019) reported that the level of global competence among students of Institut Pendidikan Guru (IPG) Kampus Dato Razali Ismail is high. Likewise, a study conducted on IPG student body leaders found a high level of global competence among student leaders (Zakaria et al., 2021). This is due to the effectiveness of the programs run at IPG to ensure IPG students have high global competence (Zakarian et al., 2020). However, these studies have only involved teacher trainers who have yet to be exposed to the real world of education. Global competence studies involving teachers are limited. An accurate measure of global competence among teachers is difficult to find. It is questionable whether these trainee teachers can continue or improve their global competence when they are in the actual educational world.

Yaacob et al (2022) found that English teachers know the importance of global competence in teaching and learning. However, knowledge and understanding of global competence among ESL teachers is modest. These teachers stated that teacher professional development programs in global competencies are insufficient. This indicates that the responsible parties need to expand global competency development programs among teachers. Professional programs like this are believed to improve global competence among teachers in Malaysia. A study conducted by Abdul Mutalib et al (2023) found that the level of global competence among IPG trainee teachers increased after implementing the Meaningful Learning Pedagogy Capacities program. This clearly shows that global competence can be improved through structured and systematic development programs.

The findings from the stated studies indicate the importance of global competence in the Malaysian educational context, both for teachers and students. While there are indications of a high level of global competence among IPG students, knowledge and understanding of the concept are still limited among teachers who play a significant role in shaping students' global competence. This points to the need to enhance professional development programs that include global competence, as demonstrated by the study that found an increase in IPG trainee teachers' global competence following a meaningful learning program. Further attention and extraordinary efforts must be made to improve the understanding and application of global competencies among Malaysian educators to achieve the country's educational goal of producing globally competitive citizens.

### **Issues and Suggestions for Improving The Global Competence of Malaysian Teachers**

Based on the literature, three issues related to teachers' global competencies are identified, along with suggestions for addressing these issues, as discussed below;

#### **Issue 1 - Limitations of The Malaysia Teacher Global Competency Study**

Studies on the global competencies of teacher trainers have been conducted in other countries. For example, studies have been conducted on prospective teachers in North America Kopish (2016) and on prospective teachers in Italy (Sokal & Parmigiani, 2022). In Malaysia, a study on global competencies was conducted on prospective teachers (Zakaria et al., 2019). However, studies on the global competencies of teachers in service are still significantly lacking both outside the country and in Malaysia. This makes it difficult for those involved to know teachers' actual level of global competence, especially in our country.

The suggestion for this first issue is that the responsible party needs to redefine and develop a framework for global competence in the Malaysian context that combines the constructs of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. Then, there is a need to develop an instrument to measure the global competency of Malaysian teachers. In addition, the study must also recognize the factors that influence the formation of global competence among teachers. Among the factors are experience or period of teaching and the subjects taught, which are believed to contribute to the level of global competence of teachers in Malaysia. The effectiveness of existing teacher global competence development programs must be reviewed and assessed. A review study on the need for further programs can also be conducted. This is to ensure that teachers have sufficient input and are prepared to set the pace in guiding students toward becoming global citizens. Hence, it ensures the quality of teachers in terms of global competence. The impact is not only on the educational development of students but also on the education system itself.

### **Issue 2 - Weaknesses of Teacher Global Competency Program Development**

The second issue is the weakness of teacher global competency program development. A study conducted by Yaacob et al (2022) found that teachers stated that courses on global competence are insufficient and need to be expanded. There is a possibility that the programs recommended by MOE are not explicitly to prepare teachers for global-level teaching and the need for education programs to be reviewed to ensure training is more inclusive and impactful, such as strengthening teachers' understanding of global competency elements (Yaacob et al., 2022).

The gaps identified through studies on global competencies among teachers in Malaysia require professional development programs that are targeted at equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge. This aligns with Vadivel et al (2021), who stated that professional development programs can hone teachers' teaching skills and ensure teachers are constantly exposed to and trained with relevant and up-to-date teaching content. These courses should also not be implemented on a 'one-off' basis. They need to be implemented on a serialized and leveled basis. Saperstein (2020), in his study on global education in the United States, states the need for continuous training for the global education of teachers. The same findings can be used in Malaysia as well. Ukpokodu (2020) has stated that the program recommended by the education authorities of his country lacks emphasis on the development of global competencies. The study by Said et al (2023) suggested that teacher professional development programs such as courses, workshops, and training programs should be enhanced as an important aspect of improving teacher competitiveness and knowledge in teaching and learning in Malaysia. This supports the need for strengthening global competency development programs among teachers that allow teachers to apply global elements in their teaching and learning sessions.

### **Issue 3 - Shortcomings of Integrating Elements of Global Competence in Teaching and Learning**

The third issue is the lack of integration of global competency elements in teaching and learning. The study conducted by Syed Zakaria et al (2020) found that there are elements of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in the Malaysian primary school curriculum. It emphasized the need for a more comprehensive integration of global issues across subjects. It also emphasizes the role of education in awakening sustainable thinking among students, fostering a sense of responsibility, and promoting a positive attitude towards sustainability.



These findings call for a more concerted effort to incorporate GCE elements across the curriculum to provide students with global citizenship that contributes to sustainable development. However, Yaacob et al (2022) found that many English teachers are unaware of the elements of global competence and the methods to integrate these elements in teaching and learning.

This shows that teachers do not integrate elements of global competence in their teaching. Teachers should be encouraged to incorporate elements of global competence in their teaching. Therefore, global competence elements should be effectively integrated into the curriculum where tweaks and adjustments may be needed to ensure learning activities and content provide opportunities for developing global competence among students. To successfully implement these changes, adequate resources and support must be available to schools and teachers. Achieving systemic improvement requires basic alignment with the goal of cultivating globally competent educators. Strong leadership at all levels, from school administrators to policymakers, is essential to spur sustained effort and provide the necessary resources. This integration also prepares students for a complex global society by understanding the global atmosphere and subsequently improving students' well-being (Mansilla & Wilson, 2020).

### **Conclusions**

This concept paper has outlined three main issues in the instillation of teachers' global competence in Malaysia, namely (a) limited studies on teachers' global competence, (b) weaknesses in the development of teachers' global competence programs, and (c) lack of integration of global elements in teaching and learning. The suggestions for improvement are (a) enhancing the study of Malaysian teachers' global competence, (b) strengthening teachers' global competence development programs, and (c) integrating global competence elements in teaching and learning. However, there are likely to be constraints in addressing this issue. Among them is the willingness of teachers to improve their global competence and subsequently integrate elements of global competence in their teaching and learning sessions. Teachers should be made aware of the importance of global competence in improving the quality and credibility of their teaching. This further study on teachers' global competencies can be carried out successfully if comprehensive cooperation from teachers, administrators, and MOE is obtained.

This concept paper can provide an initial overview of the global competence level of Malaysian teachers. Hence, it allows related and responsible parties to conduct further studies on the actual global competence level of teachers in Malaysia. The more significant implication is to increase the level of global competence among teachers and, in turn, form Malaysian students with high global competence. Thus, developing a better understanding of teachers' global competencies and help the community to understand the challenges of instilling global competence in the context of education

Teachers' global competence is important in shaping competitive students into proactive global citizens. Despite the lack of a comprehensive study on the global competence of teachers in Malaysia, the existing studies show the need for something to be done to ensure Malaysian teachers have high global competence. Further studies can be conducted by first measuring the actual level of global competence among Malaysian teachers and then recommending professional development programs tailored to the real needs of teachers to integrate global elements in teaching and learning. In addition, integrating global competencies in the curriculum also needs to be improved to ensure teachers have the space

to guide students toward becoming global citizens. Subsequently, students get sufficient exposure to global issues.

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