

**PREPARING GLOBALLY COMPETENT TEACHERS FOR 21st CENTURY EDUCATION
IN INDIA**

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Abstract

In an increasingly interconnected world, the role of teachers extends beyond traditional classroom instruction to include the development of globally competent citizens. This conceptual research paper explores the urgent need to prepare globally competent teachers in the context of 21st-century education in India. Drawing upon national education policies such as NEP 2020, NCF-FS 2022, and NFSE 2023, the paper outlines the critical competencies teachers must develop—such as intercultural understanding, global awareness, critical thinking, and adaptability—to foster inclusive and future-ready classrooms. The study identifies systemic challenges hindering this transformation, including unequal access to technology, insufficient infrastructure, limited professional development opportunities, and resistance to pedagogical innovation. It emphasizes the importance of coordinated action among policymakers, institutions, and educators to integrate global perspectives into teacher education programs and promote continuous professional learning. By positioning globally competent teachers as catalysts for educational equity and global citizenship, this paper calls for long-term investment in teacher education, research, technology, and international collaboration. The development of such educators is not only critical for national progress but also essential for India's meaningful participation in a globalized world.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Teacher education, Global competence, 21st-century skills

Introduction

In today's era of globalization and rapid technological change, the role of teachers extends beyond traditional classroom instruction to preparing learners as global citizens equipped with essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy. Key policy documents like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) 2022, and the National Framework for School Education (NFSE) 2023 emphasize these global competencies, highlighting their importance for both teachers and teacher educators. NEP 2020 stresses the need for teacher education programs to incorporate global perspectives and modern pedagogical practices, while NCF-FS 2022 focuses on early development of cultural awareness, social-emotional learning, and multilingualism. NCFSE 2023 builds on this by advocating curricula that balance Indian values with openness to global perspectives, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) supports this vision through its 21st Century Skills Framework, promoting competency-based and experiential learning to prepare students for a dynamic global society. Complementing these efforts, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has introduced reforms like the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) and the National Mission for Mentoring (NMM) to develop globally competent educators through interdisciplinary, inclusive, and technology-integrated approaches. The University Grants Commission (UGC) further advances this goal with its framework for global citizenship in higher education, prioritizing intercultural understanding, human rights, and sustainability. Collectively, these initiatives reflect a comprehensive national effort to prepare teachers capable of navigating the complexities of an interconnected world by fostering inclusive, culturally responsive, and globally informed educational environments.

Concept and Need of Global Competencies

Global competence is a multi-dimensional construct requiring a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values successfully applied to global issues or intercultural situations. (OECD, 2018). It

is having flexible, respectful attitudes, including self-perspective, and applying knowledge of the historical, geographic, and societal factors that influence cultures in order to effectively interact and build relationships with people around the world. (C. K. Hunter and W. D. Hunter, Ed.D., 2018). The concept of global competence in teachers has increasing attention in recent years, especially as educators are expected to prepare students for a complex, interconnected world. Boix Mansilla and Jackson (2011) emphasise that globally competent teachers must possess deep disciplinary knowledge along with the ability to connect curriculum content to global issues. They stress that teachers must create learning opportunities that challenge students to explore real-world problems through interdisciplinary inquiry and ethical reasoning. In this context, Cushner and Mahon (2009) state that many pre-service teachers enter the profession with limited intercultural experiences and lack the skills to incorporate global perspectives in teaching. Therefore, there is a need for experiential learning, such as studying abroad, doing global internships, and getting engaged in international collaborations. It will help build intercultural awareness and engage in reflective practices. Similarly, Larsen and Searle (2017) emphasise the importance of sustained reflection in teacher preparation, suggesting that global competence must be developed through both personal growth and pedagogical application.

The development of globally competent teachers is grounded in multiple educational theories and international frameworks that emphasize intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and holistic skill-building. At the core, intercultural competence theory (Deardorff, 2006) provides a strong foundation, defining competence as a combination of knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for effective and appropriate communication in diverse cultural contexts. According to this model, teachers must cultivate openness, curiosity, and adaptability—attributes essential for creating inclusive classrooms and fostering global awareness among students.

Among International policy frameworks that strengthen these theoretical underpinnings, the OECD Global Competence Framework (2018) identifies four key dimensions: (1) examining local, global, and intercultural issues; (2) understanding and appreciating others' perspectives; (3) engaging in open, appropriate, and effective interactions; and (4) taking responsible action for sustainability and collective well-being. Similarly, UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education (2015) model also emphasizes the integration of cognitive (knowledge), socio-emotional (values, empathy), and behavioural (participation, collaboration) competencies, which are crucial for 21st-century teaching.

Therefore, in today's interconnected and diverse world, global competence has become an essential quality for teachers and teacher educators. Teachers who possess global competence can effectively weave international perspectives and pressing global issues—such as climate change, social inequality, and cultural diversity—into their teaching. They foster inclusive, respectful learning environments that embrace diversity and promote empathy, equity, and intercultural understanding. Through their open-mindedness and encouragement of critical thinking, these educators empower students with the skills needed to engage with global challenges in a collaborative, thoughtful, and responsible manner.

Key Skills of Global Competence for Teachers and Teacher Educators

Some of the key skills of global competence include:

i) Critical thinking and problem-solving- these are foundational skills for global competence, enabling individuals to thoughtfully engage with complex global, intercultural and cross-cultural issues. These skills involve the capacity to examine, evaluate situations from multiple viewpoints, consider diverse cultural, social, and political contexts, and approach problems with an open and analytical mindset.

ii) Intercultural communication skills- involve the ability to communicate respectfully and effectively with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These skills require active listening, clear expression of ideas, and sensitivity to cultural differences. Such skills foster mutual understanding, reduce miscommunication, and support meaningful cross-cultural relationships.

iii) Perspective-taking- the skill reflects the ability to understand and appreciate diverse cultural, social, economic, political and educational viewpoints. It involves being empathetic, open-minded, and respectful of others' experiences, thoughts, views and values. This skill helps individuals bridge differences and build deeper understanding of intercultural and cross-cultural perspectives.

iv) Collaboration across cultures- means the ability to work successfully in diverse teams, whether in local or global settings. It involves sharing responsibilities, respecting different perspectives, and finding common ground. Individuals with this skill can navigate cultural differences and communicate effectively. It develops teamwork and leads to the achievement of shared goals.

v) Adaptability and flexibility- the skill involves the adjusting to new situations and cultural contexts with ease. The skill facilitates openness to change and resilience when facing unfamiliar challenges.

vi) Ethical and responsible decision-making- this skill enables one to understand global challenges like poverty, climate change, and human rights issues, and respond with integrity and fairness. It involves making choices that consider the well-being of others and the planet. The skill reflects a strong sense of global responsibility and commitment to sustainable actions across the world.

vii) Digital and media literacy- Digital and Media literacy means the ability to effectively use technology to communicate, collaborate, and access information in a global context. It involves critically evaluating online content for accuracy and bias. The skill also includes using digital tools ethically and responsibly.

Issue and Challenges in the Development of Global Competencies

Teacher education programs face several challenges in developing global competencies. These include the lack of systematic integration of global themes into the curriculum and limited faculty expertise in global education practices. Additionally, insufficient access to resources such as international materials, technology, and cross-cultural experiences further hampers progress. Cultural and institutional resistance to change also poses a significant barrier, often discouraging the adoption of innovative, globally-oriented approaches. Some of the challenges in developing global competence include,

i. Insufficient Teacher Education Programs

Many teacher-education programs in India have relied on outdated, content-heavy curricula focused on rote learning (Gupta & Singh, 2021). They often lack training in digital literacy, global perspectives, and cross-cultural communication. As a result, future teachers are not sufficiently prepared for diverse, technology-driven, global classrooms. A complete overhaul of teacher preparation is underway to achieve the goals outlined in NEP 2020.

ii. Limited Professional Development Program

Limited professional development opportunities hinder the preparation of globally competent teachers in India. Most in-service programs are outdated and rarely address global perspectives or intercultural skills. Teachers often lack training in digital tools and global education practices. “CPD programs tend to focus on basic pedagogy rather than global competencies. Access to international workshops or exchange programs is especially limited for rural and low-income teachers” (Sharma, 2022). This gap leaves educators unprepared for the demands of 21st-century classrooms.

iii. Limited Resources of Infrastructure and Technology

Digital literacy is the central point of global competency skills. In India Many schools are lacking internet access, modern devices, or training for teachers. These technological challenges restrict opportunities for virtual global classrooms, online exchange programs, and access to international teaching resources and materials. Inequality in educational infrastructure means that teachers from rural or marginalized areas have fewer opportunities to develop global competencies compared to their urban counterparts. Such disparities limit equitable teacher preparation nationwide (Sharma, 2022).

iv. Mindset Barriers

Some teachers and institutions exhibit reluctance to adopt globalized curriculum and practices due to perceived complexity, fear of additional workload, or the belief that international perspectives may undermine local cultural values (Kumar & Ahuja, 2020). So, the mindset of teachers is one of the challenges in implementing Global Competencies.

v. Lack of Mentoring

Lack of mentoring in teacher education programs limits professional growth and confidence among teachers and educators. Without guidance from experienced mentors, the development of essential competency skills remains incomplete and inconsistent. Teachers may struggle to apply theory, improve classroom practices, or address diverse student needs effectively. The National Mission for Mentoring (NMM) addresses this gap by providing structured support, feedback, and role modelling. NMM helps ensure teachers develop the skills necessary for 21st-century education. Through mentoring, teachers become better prepared to meet the challenges of modern classrooms.\

Current Initiatives taken by the Government and other educational bodies

Since the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the government and various educational bodies have undertaken significant initiatives to enhance global competencies within teacher education. In alignment with NEP 2020, two major policy frameworks—the National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF-FS, 2022) and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE, 2023)—have been developed to provide a comprehensive roadmap for school education in India. Both frameworks operationalize NEP's vision by embedding global competencies across all stages of schooling. NCF-FS (2022) emphasizes multilingualism, play-based, and experiential learning to foster curiosity, empathy, socio-emotional development, and respect for diversity from early childhood, establishing openness and adaptability as foundational elements of global competence. Building on this foundation, NCFSE (2023) expands the focus to critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy, while integrating cross-cutting themes such as ethics, environmental responsibility, and cultural rootedness. Together, these frameworks create a coherent continuum that equips students with the values, skills, and dispositions necessary to thrive as globally competent citizens in the 21st century.

Following this, NCERT has strengthened digital infrastructure through platforms like DIKSHA, expanded MOOCs such as NISHTHA, and introduced activity-based, culturally relevant textbooks to promote creativity, problem-solving, and global mindedness from early stages. Similarly, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has implicitly supported these goals through initiatives such as the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), the National Mission for Mentoring (NMM), and the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST), aiming to uphold global standards in teacher preparation. The University Grants Commission (UGC) launched the Malaviya Mission–Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP) to build capacity with training themes encompassing holistic education, Indian knowledge systems, ethics, digital integration, multidisciplinary thinking, and global citizenship. Additionally, UGC has enhanced faculty development via Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs), the "Guru Dakshata" induction program, and Faculty Development Programs (FDPs) focused on advanced technologies, ensuring educators maintain global competence. Likewise, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has developed a '21st Century Skills Framework' that explicitly foregrounds critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy as foundational skills for cultivating globally competent education.

Key Suggestions and Insights

Suggestions for fostering global competencies among teachers and teacher educators include,

i. Reform and Curriculum Integration

Teacher education programs should proactively integrate global competence components including critical thinking and problem solving, inter-cultural, cross-cultural communication and understanding, sustainability education, and digital literacy into the curriculum. NEP 2020 advocates for multidisciplinary and experiential learning approaches, which should be extended to teacher preparation by incorporating global case studies, comparative education modules, and international policy analysis.

ii. Strengthening Pre-Service Teacher Education

Aligned with NEP 2020's call for reimagining teacher preparation, universities and teacher education institutions should integrate global education courses, including comparative education, international curriculum frameworks, international policy frameworks, and intercultural studies exchange programs.

iii. Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

In-service teachers require ongoing training to remain updated with global trends. Organised CPD initiatives can include workshops, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), and peer-learning communities focused on digital tools, diversity management, and cross-cultural pedagogy (Sharma, 2022). Internationally recognized programs, such as UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education initiatives can serve as models.

iv. Promoting Attitudinal Change

Workshops and reflective exercises can help teachers and teacher educators overcome resistance to change by highlighting the benefits of global competence for classroom effectiveness and student success (Kumar & Ahuja, 2020). Leadership programs that foster innovation, empathy, and inclusivity can shift teacher's mindset over time.

v. Language and Multilingual Competence

NEP 2020 emphasizes multilingual education as a pathway to cultural understanding. Teachers should be trained in language sensitivity and given opportunities to learn additional languages, collaboration with Indian and International Language Centres enhancing their ability to interact in diverse contexts across the globe.

vi. Incorporating Global Perspectives in Teaching Pedagogy and Learning Materials

Teachers and teacher educators should use textbooks, resources, and real-world examples that reflect global issues such as sustainability, peace, and cultural and geographical diversity. Creating inclusive and globally relevant classroom content helps students understand interdependence and respect for diversity (UGC, 2021).

vii. Embedding Global Competence in Assessment Systems

Assessment methods must evaluate not only subject knowledge but also skills like critical thinking, intercultural communication, and collaboration. Competency-based assessment, as recommended in NCFSE 2023, can ensure that teachers focus on developing and measuring these outcomes.

viii. Technology Integrated Global Classrooms

Digital tools can facilitate cross-border collaboration, enabling teachers to participate in webinars, virtual conferences, and online communities of practice. Schools should prioritize investment in ICT infrastructure and training to ensure teachers are proficient in integrating technology for global learning.

ix. Promoting Teacher Research on Global Education

Teachers should be encouraged to undertake classroom-based research on global competence, share findings through professional networks, and publish in academic forums. Action research, projects can help contextualize global ideas into local realities (Reimers et al., 2020).

x. International Collaboration and Exchange Programs

Partnerships between Indian teacher-training institutions and foreign universities or organizations can expose teachers to globally best practices. Virtual exchange programs, projects, and collaborative research initiatives can bridge geographical and financial barriers, offering global exposure without requiring physical travel (Reimers et al., 2020).

xi. Policy Implementation and Support Systems

Strong institutional mechanisms Government supports are required to translate national policies into practice. Central Government, state governments, Teacher education boards, and school management systems must provide clear guidelines, funding, and monitoring frameworks for integrating global competence in all aspects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the cultivation of globally competent teachers is not a peripheral ambition but a national imperative essential to realizing the transformative goals of 21st-century education. As emphasized by key policy frameworks such as NEP 2020, NCF-FS 2022, and NFSE 2023, this transformation hinges

on overcoming persistent barriers—including technological disparities, infrastructural gaps, limited professional development, and resistance to pedagogical innovation (Sharma, 2022; Kumar & Ahuja, 2020). Addressing these challenges demands coordinated, multi-level action: policymakers must ensure clear guidance and sustained funding; teacher education programs must embed global perspectives; and educators must commit to lifelong learning and pedagogical adaptability. Crucially, this progress must be inclusive, extending its benefits to rural, underserved, and marginalized communities to avoid deepening existing educational divides. Ultimately, globally competent teachers are vital not only for delivering curriculum but for nurturing critically aware, culturally responsive, and socially responsible citizens—individuals equipped to contribute meaningfully to a peaceful, sustainable, and equitable global society.

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