



# Global Competence and Intercultural Education: Challenges and Recommendations

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## ABSTRACT

*This article discusses global competence and intercultural education as well as practices in some countries toward challenges faced and some recommendations presented. Literature review and deep studies on international data collected and its analysis on different approaches toward global challenges by various countries has enriched the study. The result found that the development of global competence and intercultural education is on progress for better education of future world generations. Countries around the world, including Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Taiwan, provide valuable examples of how to approach this integration within their educational systems. Despite challenges such as teacher preparedness and unequal access to resources, the continuous development of policies and educational frameworks ensure that global competence becomes an integral part of education worldwide. It suggests empowering learners of all ages from schools and higher education to act for a more peaceful, inclusive, sustainable world and cooperation.*

**Keywords:** *global education, internationalization education, intercultural education*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly connected world, the ability of individuals to interact and collaborate with people from different cultural backgrounds has become essential. Education now not only prepares students to participate at a local level but also to become active and responsible as global citizens (Ansari et al., 2024). Boix Mansilla and Jackson (2011) emphasized that in order to succeed in a globalized economy and act responsibly as global citizens, students must cultivate global competence and intercultural understanding. That is the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance. This means that global competence is not only an option, but also a necessity to be put together into the educational system (Daud & Mariati, 2022).

Global competence refers to a set of attitudes, skills, and knowledge that enable individuals to understand the world and interact effectively in multicultural contexts. According to The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2018), “*Global competence is the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate different perspectives and world views, to interact successfully and respectfully with others, and to take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being*” (OECD, 2018).

### The Future of Global Competence and Intercultural Education

According to Daud and Mariati (2022), the advancement of global competence and intercultural education depends on ongoing adaptation and transformation. As global issues continue to shift, educational systems need to stay agile and responsive, preparing students not just with information, but also with the skills for critical analysis and meaningful participation in an ever-evolving world.

As societies become more interconnected, students will increasingly need to not only appreciate cultural diversity but also develop the ability to work collaboratively across international boundaries (Nguyet & Daud, 2021). In the face of pressing global issues such as climate change, health emergencies, and political unrest, global competence will play a crucial role in generating effective solutions. Reflecting this shift, the OECD



(2018) asserted that in a world marked by growing interdependence, global competence constitutes a vital component of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to engage meaningfully with global issues and help address them.

## **Global Competence**

### **a. The relevance of global competence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Global competence is particularly relevant in addressing contemporary challenges such as international migration, climate change, political conflicts, and economic disparities. In the workforce, many companies now seek employees who are not only technically skilled but also possess cross-cultural communication abilities (Ansari et al., 2024; World Economic Forum, 2020).

According to the World Economic Forum (2020), “Cross-cultural competency will be among the top skills in demand across industries, as globalization and digitalization continue to shape the future of work.” This suggests that education must aim to prepare students to face the complexities of the global workforce.

### **b. International frameworks**

International organizations like UNESCO and OECD have played significant roles in promoting global education as part of the broader sustainable development agenda. UNESCO (2015) defines Global Citizenship Education (GCED) as “a strategic response to contemporary global challenges, aiming to empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies.” GCED is part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 4, Target 4.7, which states that all learners should acquire knowledge and skills to support sustainable development, including global education and citizenship. OECD, through its PISA Global Competence Framework (2018), also advocates for the integration of global competence in education systems. “Global competence must be part of curriculum frameworks, teaching materials, and assessment tools to have real impact”, as emphasized by OECD (2018).

Global competence and intercultural education are not optional in today’s interconnected world but essential for preparing students to thrive in a global society. The case studies of countries like Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Taiwan illustrate how national policies can support the development of global competence through curriculum integration, teacher training, and international collaboration. As UNESCO (2015) stated, “The goal of global citizenship education is not to create uniform global citizens, but responsible, critically aware individuals who value diversity and act for a more just and peaceful world”.

## **Intercultural Education**

### **a. Intercultural education and its role**

Intercultural education serves as a tool to build global competence from an early age. Its main goal is to promote intercultural understanding, reduce stereotypes, and foster solidarity among people (Nguyễn & Daud, 2021). Banks (2006) explained, “Intercultural education is essential to prepare students to live in a global society and to participate effectively in it.” This highlights that intercultural education is not only about learning about other cultures but also about shaping attitudes and values that respect diversity.

In practice, intercultural education encourages critical reflection on one’s identity and acknowledges that no single cultural view is superior to another. Nieto (2010) added that, “Intercultural education helps students examine their own cultural assumptions and understand how these affect their interactions with others.”

### **b. Implementation of global education policies**

Global education policies have gained significant attention at the international level in response to 21st-century challenges such as globalization, migration, climate change, and social inequality. Global education is no longer seen as an optional aspect of schooling, but a fundamental component that needs to be embedded across educational systems.



## 2. METHODS

This research is a library research that literature review of books, journals, policies and regulation toward global competence and intercultural education were investigated (Saputro, 2017). Updated information and phenomenon of challenges were focused in the research as well as looking for recommendations. Qualitative approach dominantly used to do data and information analysis before finally taking conclusion. Analysis on strategies, practices and challenges done by those countries of Australia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan.

As a matter of fact two prominent aspects to achieve global competence and intercultural understanding in education were done through learning how curriculum integration and cultural exchange programs bring impact on global competence and intercultural education for their students and community in general.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Strategies to Achieve Global Competence and Intercultural Understanding in Education

#### 3.1.1 *Integration into Curriculum*

Integrating global competence into the curriculum can be achieved through a cross-disciplinary approach. For example, geography lessons can address issues of migration and their impacts on cultural identity; language lessons can be used to explore literature from various cultures.

OECD (2018) recommended that “teachers embed global and intercultural issues into subject content, enabling students to engage with authentic and meaningful global themes.” This teaching method helps students see the connections between subjects and real-world issues they face as global citizens.

#### 3.1.2 *Cultural Exchange Programs*

International student exchange programs or virtual collaboration (virtual exchange) have proven effective in developing intercultural understanding. O’Dowd (2007) stated, “Online intercultural exchanges allow students to develop global skills without the economic and logistical barriers of physical mobility.” Programs like this also promote inclusivity and can reach students in various geographic locations.

#### 3.1.3 *Case Studies on Implementation of Curriculum Integration & Cultural Exchange Programs*

##### a. Australia

Australia has a long-standing commitment to promoting global competence and intercultural education within its educational system. The Australian Curriculum, developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), includes a cross-curriculum priority of “Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia”, aimed at developing students’ understanding of the region and fostering intercultural skills.

According to ACARA (2013), “The cross-curriculum priority of Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia aims to equip students to live and work successfully in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. This initiative not only focuses on knowledge about Asia but also emphasizes the development of open-minded attitudes towards different cultures.

The *Intercultural Understanding Capability* in the curriculum also aims to “support students to become responsible global citizens who can relate to and communicate across cultures” (ACARA, 2020). This approach demonstrates that Australia views cultural diversity as both a social reality and an asset for learning.

##### b. Indonesia

As a nation with immense cultural diversity, Indonesia faces unique challenges and opportunities in fostering global competence and intercultural education (Daud et al., 2022). The *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Freedom Curriculum) launched in 2022 emphasized providing students with the space to explore local contexts while also developing global connections.



The Indonesian Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Nadiem Makarim, stated, “Education must create Pancasila students who think globally but remain grounded in local values” (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). In practice, schools incorporate project-based and contextual learning that tackles global issues such as climate change, gender equality, and technology.

Furthermore, student exchange programs like *Darmasiswa* and the *Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA)* provide opportunities for Indonesian students to build intercultural competence through direct interaction (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

c. Vietnam

Vietnam is an example of a country that has undergone rapid transformation in its educational approach (Nguyet & Daud, 2022). In recent years, the Vietnamese government has worked with international institutions to strengthen competency-based education, with a particular focus on global citizenship.

According to Nguyen and Pham (2019), “Vietnam’s general education curriculum reform emphasizes competency-based education, with global citizenship and intercultural skills as essential elements.” One of the approaches employed is problem-based learning (PBL), which tackles global themes, as well as a significant emphasis on foreign language learning, particularly English, as a gateway to the global stage (Nguyet & Daud, 2022). Additionally, the *Vietnam Global Education Dialogue* aims to address global issues and foster international collaboration, contributing to the national educational agenda.

d. Thailand

Thailand has implemented several initiatives to integrate global competence into its educational system. One such approach involves incorporating the *Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP)*, which blends local wisdom with global knowledge and sustainability principles (Deenang, Thanyasunthornsakun, & Paisan, 2023),

According to a UNESCO Bangkok report (2018), “Thailand’s educational reforms seek to balance local wisdom and global knowledge, cultivating students who are rooted in Thai values yet able to thrive in a globalized world”. The Thai government also promotes intercultural learning through international school programs and collaborations within ASEAN. Programs like *English Integrated Studies* and *Teach for Thailand* help enhance global communication skills and foster intercultural perspectives among students and teachers (Eiamkosakun et al., 2024; Deenang et al. 2024).

e. Taiwan

Taiwan places a strong emphasis on global civic education as part of its educational reform in response to geopolitical challenges and technological advancements. The Ministry of Education has been actively promoting the integration of global issues into teaching, including the *Bilingual Nation 2030 Policy*. Wu (2020) noted, “Taiwanese education reform has increasingly focused on global competence, with emphasis on bilingualism, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding.” Schools are encouraged to develop international exchange programs, virtual global collaborations, and joint research projects to broaden students’ global perspectives. One of the key initiatives is *International Education 2.0*, which aims to raise global awareness from primary schools to universities.

## 3.2 Challenges

### 3.2.1 Teacher training and professional development

As highlighted by the OECD Global Competence Framework (2018), effective global education depends heavily on educators who are well-trained to integrate intercultural and global education into their teaching. However, in many countries, educators are not sufficiently prepared to engage students in global and intercultural learning. Teachers often lack the specialized training, experience, or resources to effectively teach global issues and intercultural perspectives (Deenang et al., 2024; Daud et al., 2024; Daud et al., 2022; Kuo & Daud, 2014). As Merryfield (2000) noted, “Without effective teacher training, the integration of global competence into the classroom will remain superficial at best”.



To overcome this, professional development programs focused on intercultural competence and global issues must be a key component of teacher preparation. Countries like Canada and Finland have prioritized this by embedding intercultural education within their teacher certification programs.

### 3.2.2 *Addressing national and local contexts*

Another challenge arises in balancing global competence with local identity and values (Nguyet & Daud, 2021). In culturally homogeneous societies, educators may struggle to see the relevance of global competence, and this may be perceived as a form of cultural dilution or external influence. In these contexts, global competence must be integrated in a way that respects and values local cultural identities, as seen in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Indonesia, which fosters both local identity and global perspectives. As Banks and Banks (2010) asserted, “Global competence must not erase local cultures, but should enhance students’ understanding of the interconnectedness of the world and their own cultural heritage”.

### 3.2.3 *Unequal access to education and resources*

Unequal access to education and resources remains a significant barrier, especially in low-income or rural areas (Daud et al., 2024; Daud, 2017). Students in disadvantaged regions may lack access to the technology, international exposure, or curricula designed to promote global competence (Ansari et al., 2024; Daud et al., 2018). Programs like virtual exchanges and digital learning platforms can help mitigate this barrier, as they allow students to engage with global peers without the financial burden of travel. However, the challenge of equitable access remains a pressing concern.

## 3.3 **Recommendations**

### 3.3.1 *Policy support for global competence integration*

Governments must take a proactive role in integrating global competence into national education policies (Deenang et al, 2023; Daud et al., 2020; Daud & Mariati, 2022). This involves revising curricula to include global and intercultural issues as core elements. Policymakers should ensure that global competence is integrated not only into specialized subjects but across all disciplines to demonstrate the interconnectedness of global challenges.

The OECD (2018) suggested, “Governments should actively engage in creating curricula and policies that encourage the development of global competence, from early education to higher learning”.

### 3.3.2 *Strengthening global education partnerships*

Global competence is best developed through collaboration. Educational institutions should build partnerships with other countries, universities, and international organizations (Sain et al., 2022). This would allow students to experience intercultural exchange and collaborative problem-solving on global issues.

As Boix Mansilla and Jackson (2011) emphasized, “Building partnerships across cultures and nations is essential to the development of students’ global competence”.

### 3.3.3 *Fostering global citizenship beyond the classroom*

Global competence should extend beyond the classroom. Schools and universities should encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities such as community service projects, international volunteering, and global awareness campaigns (Daud et al., 2024; Sain et al., 2022). These activities allow students to practice the values of global citizenship, including social responsibility, sustainability, and intercultural respect.

## 4. **CONCLUSION**

The development of global competence and intercultural education is no longer a luxury but a necessity for the education of future generations. Through integrated curriculum, teacher training, and international



collaboration, students can be empowered to become responsible global citizens who understand and act on issues of global significance.

Countries around the world, including Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Taiwan, provide valuable examples of how to approach this integration within their educational systems. Despite challenges such as teacher preparedness and unequal access to resources, the continuous development of policies and educational frameworks will ensure that global competence becomes an integral part of education worldwide. As UNESCO (2015) rightly concluded, “Global citizenship education is about empowering learners of all ages to take action for a more peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable world.”

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