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# *Perspectives on Global Competency Development in Shanghai International Schools: A Qualitative Study of Parents and Teachers*

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***Abstract:*** The research delves into how parents and educators in Shanghai's schools view the promotion of global competencies in the context of globalization and cross-cultural education practices through qualitative approaches such as semi-formal interviews to explore expectations concerning curriculum structure and teaching strategies that aid students, in acquiring global skills. The results show that parents often prioritize success and tangible results when it comes to international education for their children as a means to secure spots in prestigious universities and lucrative career paths; on the other hand, teachers prefer a more comprehensive method focusing on fostering critical thinking skills and adaptability along with promoting intercultural awareness to shape well-rounded individuals with a global perspective. This research underscores the importance of creating a rounded curriculum that integrates academic challenges, with hands-on learning experiences to address both educational and personal growth objectives. The study constraints involve the extent of the research and the size of the sample which implies that future investigations should delve into how educational practices affect competence development over time and the role of family involvement, in international education.

***Keywords:*** global competency, international schools, transnational education, parental expectations, holistic development.

## 1. Introduction

The growth of education has experienced a rise as a key aspect of globalization defined by the transfer and adoption of educational systems between countries, as well as the sharing of curricula and teaching approaches across nation's borders. In this scenario, international schools play a role in providing environments where students from diverse cultural backgrounds can develop the necessary skills, for engaging actively in global interactions and partnerships. By nurturing skills like thinking and flexibility in addition to fostering effective cross-cultural communication and a comprehensive grasp of global issues students are equipped to actively participate and thrive in an ever more interconnected global society. International schools play a role in helping students acquire the abilities necessary to engage thoughtfully and knowledgeably in a complex and interconnected world. Ultimately cultivating the concept of global citizenship.

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In the city of Shanghai renowned for its bustling finance industry and rich cultural scene there has been a rise in the number of international schools to cater to the educational needs of expatriate families and affluent local residents alike. These schools typically offer known curricula such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) A levels and Advanced Placement (AP) providing a blend of challenging academics with a strong global perspective. However, there is often a divergence in opinions between parents and educators regarding the goals and expected results of schooling. Parents often focus on their children's success and getting into college or university programs whereas teachers tend to value a more comprehensive approach, to nurturing global skills to shape individuals who are well-rounded and globally competent.

This research explores viewpoints by examining the question; "What are the views of parents and teachers in international schools in Shanghai, on how these schools enhance students' global skills and what do they expect from curriculum development and teaching methods?" Through research methods employed in this study aim to provide valuable insights that could shape the direction of curriculum planning and teaching strategies in international educational settings.

## 2. Transnational Education: Concept and Development

Transnational education involves offering programs that reach beyond borders using physical institutions or online platforms. This approach to education has become increasingly popular thanks to the impact of globalization and the growing mobility of students and educators alike [1]. Various forms of education exist such as branch campuses and distance learning programs along, with international schools that function in host countries while following foreign or global educational guidelines [2]. International schools have an impact within this structure as they help develop important global skills in students and equip them to thrive in a world that is increasingly interconnected with various challenges to overcome.

According to Bray and Thomas one of the advantages of transnational education is its ability to offer a blend of global and local perspectives in learning by combining global views with local cultural values effectively, within international schools' curricula to align with the host country's cultural context while also fostering a global mindset [3]. International schools located in Shanghai often incorporate aspects of history and culture to connect with the local students while still emphasizing a curriculum that highlights global understanding and flexibility. This delicate blend of local values fosters an educational setting that encourages students to reconcile their cultural background with the demands of being global citizens [4].

## 3. The Role of International Schools in Global Competency Development

International schools are commonly seen as places that foster the development of citizenship by preparing students for success in international settings [5]. The diverse educational atmospheres in these schools introduce students to viewpoints and encourage them to value and comprehend different cultures effectively; however, there are varying opinions among stakeholders such, as parents, educators and school leaders regarding the purpose of international education.

Many Chinese parents see schools as a way for their children to get into respected universities worldwide and pursue successful careers in the future. Their main priorities often revolve around success, language proficiency and doing well on standardized tests. Qualities they believe are crucial for their children to thrive in today's competitive global arena. Parents commonly link readiness with tangible academic accomplishments and language abilities. They view schooling as a strategic move to pave the way for opportunities, in Western nations [6]. Parents often invest a lot both financially and emotionally in their children's education hoping it will lead to a brighter future, for them.

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In comparison to this perspective presented in the text is that teachers see global competence in a more comprehensive way – they see it as covering critical thinking abilities as well as creativity and empathy with an understanding of different cultures and perspectives in mind [7]. Teachers believe that international education plays a role in shaping responsible global citizens who can effectively interact with diverse cultures and viewpoints by nurturing students who excel not only academically but also possess the essential interpersonal and analytical skills needed for active participation, in a global community. Parent expectations of success often clash with the broader skills teachers deem crucial for thriving in a globalized society underscoring the complexities that international schools grapple with.

## 4. Balancing Cultural Adaptation and Global Goals

One of the difficulties in international education is finding a way to harmonize curricula that are geared toward a global perspective with the cherished cultural beliefs and identities of families and communities. Recent studies conducted by Goh and Lee underscore the importance of adapting to cultures, within international schools especially since local families often want their children to embrace a global outlook while staying connected to their cultural heritage [8]. In Shanghai's schools it's crucial to maintain a delicate equilibrium as parents frequently desire their children to uphold a robust Chinese identity while pursuing an international education path.

Many parents wish to maintain their roots while also preparing their children for a globalized world by choosing an educational approach that values both aspects equally important. On the hand teachers emphasize the importance of nurturing a flexible global perspective in students and suggest that international schools should prioritize exposure to various cultures and viewpoints instead of favoritism towards any single cultural identity. A teacher, from the research mentioned that "International education ought to encourage students to value all cultures than just their own."

In line with research findings indicating that having skills and being open minded are crucial aspects of global competence; teachers in international schools often integrate aspects of different cultures to help students appreciate diversity as a valuable asset in global settings. Nonetheless there are times when this approach conflicts with the desires of parents who expect curricula to uphold customs and values. As a result, finding the balance between local and global educational goals poses a significant challenge, for international schools that need to navigate the expectations of both parents and educators [9].

## 5. Research Methodology

### 5.1. Research Design

This research uses a method to investigate how parents and teachers view the development of global competence in international schools, in Shanghai. It employs methods because they offer a deep insight into intricate attitudes and beliefs that quantitative methods may struggle to capture effectively [10]. Semi structured interviews were chosen as the data collection technique to give participants the freedom to express their perspectives while enabling researchers to delve into particular themes related to the research question.

### 5.2. Sample Selection

The research sample consisted of 10 parents and 10 teachers from five schools in Shanghai who were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a varied representation in terms of gender and cultural backgrounds and age groups with participants chosen based on their active role, in international education practices. Parents were mandated to have a child enrolled at the school for a duration of

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one year while teachers were required to possess a minimum of three years experience teaching within an international school setting. This method of selecting participants guaranteed that individuals were well versed in the field of education allowing them to offer meaningful perspectives for the research.

### 5.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Information and data were gathered by conducting formal interviews that lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and were recorded with the participants' permission in audio format. A thematic analysis approach based on Braun and Clarkessix phase method was utilized to examine the collected data and identify recurring themes, in the participant's responses [11]. This process enabled a review of the information to help the research team recognize patterns and categorize discoveries into themes related to educational objectives, cultural adjustment, and teaching practices.

### 5.4. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and measures were taken to protect their privacy and confidentiality. Data were securely stored, and the study adhered to ethical research standards to safeguard participants' rights and well-being throughout the research process.

## 6. Results

The analysis of the interview data highlighted several distinct differences between parents' and teachers' views on global competency development, which were grouped into three main themes.

### 6.1. Educational Goals

Parents place a focus, on their children's academic achievements and future prospects.

Parents often link competence with how well their children perform academically and their proficiency in languages. Seeing international education as a way to boost their chances of getting into top universities. Is schooling chosen by many parents as a strategy to enhance their child's prospects when applying to esteemed universities? One parent explained; "We opted for an education to help our child stand out in university admissions." This perspective is supported by research indicating that parents view education as a valuable investment, in their children's future [6].

Educators focusing on nurturing rounded individuals and fostering a sense of global responsibility.

Teachers focus on more than academic skills; they also prioritize critical thinking abilities and social awareness alongside creativity in their student's education." My goal is not academic readiness but also nurturing critical thinking and fostering global engagement " a teacher expressed. This comprehensive approach demonstrates a dedication, to cultivating rounded individuals capable of excelling both academically and socially in varied cultural settings.

### 6.2. Cultural Adaptation

Protecting heritage is vital for future generations to connect with their roots.

Local parents frequently emphasize the importance of their children maintaining their roots while also acquiring skills that are globally competitive according to a parent's statement; "We hope our kids can thrive on a global scale but still cherish their origins." This emphasis on preserving identity resonates with prevalent beliefs, in Chinese communities.

Educators prioritize the importance of adapting to cultures.

Teachers view adaptation, as the skill to interact with and appreciate diverse cultures; they suggest that international schools should prioritize guiding students to develop into culturally adept

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individuals capable of navigating different cultural settings successfully. One teacher emphasized that "Genuine global competence entails the capability to excel in any setting."

### 6.3. Teaching Methodologies

Parents play a role, in providing their children with a well-organized educational environment and ensuring academic excellence.

Most parents tend to prefer methods like routine evaluations and well defined academic goals that reflect their emphasis on measurable educational achievements. One parent highlighted the significance of witnessing outcomes from their child's education by stating; "Seeing results from this education is crucial, for us."

Teachers embracing learning and student centered approaches.

Teachers favor project oriented learning methods as they believe these foster critical thinking skills and adaptability by encouraging students to solve problems actively in real world contexts rather, than just theoretical situations.

## 7. Discussion

The results show a difference in the goals of parents and teachers in Shanghai's international schools when it comes to education priorities. Parents tend to see competence as a means to enhance academic achievements and pave the way for future career prospects due, to their substantial commitment both financially and emotionally. On the hand teachers advocate for a broader perspective that encompasses critical thinking skills, adaptability and cultural awareness.

Meeting the needs of curriculum developers in international schools presents a complex task to overcome. The schools might consider implementing assessments with structures to meet the expectations of parents seeking measurable results while simultaneously providing hands on learning experiences to foster the overall growth of global skills. This rounded strategy could potentially cater to the preferences of both parents and educators alike resulting in a comprehensive educational journey for students.

### 7.1. Implications for Policy and Practice

These discoveries have implications for policymakers and educators in international schools as they highlight the need for consistent communication with parents to align their expectations with the school's educational goals effectively. Additionally, schools should explore the idea of incorporating flexible curriculum structures that blend challenging academics, with hands on learning experiences to cater to both advancement and personal development of students.

Moreover, creating channels for communication, between parents, educators and school leaders can foster a shared understanding enabling schools to adapt to the changing requirements of their societies.

### 7.2. Future Research Directions

In the research could explore how different educational methods affect students' global skills in the long run. It would be beneficial to compare hands on learning with academic approaches to gain valuable insights for teachers and policymakers. Additionally, delving into how family participation influences international education could deepen our knowledge of how parents impact strategies and results. By examining these factors future studies can shed light on the intricacies and changes, within education.

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## 8. Conclusion

The study showcases the contrasting opinions held by parents and teachers on the development of competence in international schools in Shanghai, parents value tangible accomplishments and academic excellence above all else while educators champion a well-rounded strategy that highlights critical thinking skills and cultural awareness besides adaptability too. To equip students for achievements, in a world interconnected on a scale effectively requires international schools to manage these divergent views intelligently to establish nurturing educational settings that cultivate both intellectual advancement and personal development effectively.

However, it's important to note the restrictions of this research for studies. Firstly, the study's qualitative method is beneficial for understanding viewpoints but may restrict how applicable the results are to different settings outside of international schools in Shanghai. Secondly, due to the sample size used in the study, there could be limitations on representing the various perspectives of parents and teachers, in diverse educational environments worldwide. In conclusion because this is a sectional study it doesn't consider how parental and teacher viewpoints might change with evolving educational rules or societal standards over time.

In response to these constraints mentioned above potential future investigations may consider using approaches to evaluate the effects of educational strategies on the progression of student's global skills over a period of time. Broader and varied participant pools as well as studies spanning multiple locations could further substantiate the results and enhance their applicability. Extending research in these directions could provide profound understandings on the efficacy of different teaching techniques the impact of parental engagement and the wider consequences of international education, on nurturing global capabilities.

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