Shaping global educators: The path to professional growth in international teaching roles

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: *Teachers, teacher professional development, global educators*	*The purpose of this research is to explore the qualifications, steps, and challenges associated with becoming a world-class teacher in the global digital age. As the role of teachers evolves, they are required to not only teach and guide but also to assess, train, and evaluate students, demanding a diverse skill set and a strong educational background. In this context, lifelong learning and adaptability to educational advancements are crucial. A case study methodology was employed, gathering data from teachers who are currently working internationally. The findings highlight that becoming a world-class teacher requires continuous professional development, a solid educational foundation, and the ability to navigate global teaching challenges. Key obstacles include adapting to diverse educational systems, maintaining professional growth in dynamic environments, and overcoming cultural barriers. The results suggest that teachers who successfully meet these challenges are more likely to thrive in a global teaching context.*

1. Introduction

The opportunity to work internationally as an English teacher is a key benefit of globalization, with numerous jobs and experiences available for qualified educators. Globalization not only opens doors for teachers to work outside their home countries but also enhances their professional development through exposure to diverse educational systems. As the demand for teachers in global settings grows, it becomes increasingly important for educators to meet the high standards and qualifications required to succeed in international teaching roles. Becoming a "world-class" teacher entails not only possessing advanced qualifications but also a wealth of teaching experience, adaptability, and continuous professional development.

The concept of world-class teaching has been explored in several studies, highlighting that world-class educators possess exceptional skills, knowledge, and competencies that allow them to meet the demands of diverse educational contexts. According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), the term "world-class" refers to being "of the highest caliber in the world." In the field of education, this translates to a teacher who can demonstrate exceptional pedagogical expertise, cultural awareness, and the ability to adapt to a variety of educational

settings globally. For example, research by Darling-Hammond (2006) emphasizes that world-class teachers must engage in ongoing professional learning and skill enhancement to stay competitive in the global job market.

However, despite the growing body of literature on teacher professionalism and global education, there remains a gap in understanding the specific steps and challenges faced by teachers striving to become world-class. While many studies focus on the importance of qualifications and professional development, few address the practical aspects of navigating the complexities of teaching in diverse, global contexts. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the requirements, qualifications, and challenges faced by teachers working outside Indonesia, providing insights into the path toward becoming a world-class educator.

This paper addresses two main research questions: (1) What are the requirements and steps for becoming a world-class teacher? (2) What challenges do teachers face when striving to meet the standards of world-class teaching? The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the understanding of global teaching practices and inform teachers seeking to enhance their qualifications and careers internationally.

2. Theoretical Review

The concept of professional development has been widely discussed within the field of education, particularly in relation to enhancing teachers' capabilities and competencies. A teacher's professional growth is crucial for ensuring that they not only meet national standards but also maintain the ability to adapt to the evolving demands of a globalized education system. The notion of what it means to be a "professional" teacher has evolved in recent decades, with recent studies further emphasizing the importance of continuous learning, collaboration, and innovation in teaching.

Ur, Pettis, and Taylor, as cited in Richards and Renandya (2002), provide foundational insights into professional development. Ur (2002) highlights that being a "professional" involves performing a specific function with expertise, but it also requires ongoing self-improvement. Pettis (2002) reinforces the idea that professional competence is not static; rather, teachers should engage in a lifelong journey of self-improvement, consistently enhancing their knowledge and skills to remain effective. Taylor (2002) suggests that one way for teachers to develop professionalism is through action research, wherein teachers systematically examine and refine their own practices to improve teaching outcomes. These experts argue that such activities—whether joining professional organizations, attending conferences, engaging in research, or continuously learning—are crucial to becoming a world-class teacher capable of competing in the global arena.

Recent studies have built on these ideas by emphasizing the importance of specific strategies for professional development, especially in today's digital age. In a study by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), the authors argue that the global educational landscape requires teachers to possess a broad set of skills, ranging from subject matter expertise to technological fluency. Professional development initiatives must, therefore, focus on both content knowledge and the ability to integrate digital tools into teaching practice. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), ongoing professional development programs should be designed to meet the dynamic needs of teachers, offering opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and exposure to global teaching practices.

In line with this, a study by Korthagen (2020) stresses the importance of reflective practice as a key component of professional growth. Korthagen suggests that teachers must engage in regular self-reflection and assessment to ensure that their teaching methods align with current educational best practices. This continuous cycle of reflection and adaptation is seen as essential for teachers striving to become world-class professionals who can effectively navigate various cultural and educational contexts.

Moreover, the role of networking and professional communities has also been emphasized as a critical factor in professional development. Research by Vieira and Lemos (2022) highlights the importance of teachers connecting with global networks and participating in international professional development programs. These experiences provide teachers with insights into global teaching standards and allow them to learn from colleagues in diverse contexts. In fact, Vieira and Lemos (2022) argue that such international exposure is increasingly seen as a key indicator of a teacher's readiness to work in high-level, global educational settings.

The global shift towards digital and blended learning has also prompted a reevaluation of the competencies required of world-class teachers. A recent study by Hattie and Yates (2021) identifies "technology integration" as one of the key areas where teachers must develop expertise. Hattie and Yates (2021) suggest that world-class teachers must not only have strong pedagogical skills but also be adept at using technology to enhance student learning. They assert that digital literacy is now a fundamental aspect of a teacher's professional competence and is a necessary skill for teachers aspiring to work internationally.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of adaptability and resilience in teaching. According to research by Zepeda (2022), professional development programs have had to adapt quickly to remote learning environments, requiring teachers to acquire new skills in digital communication, online teaching methods, and virtual collaboration. Zepeda (2022) notes that teachers who were able to quickly adapt to these changes demonstrated a higher level of professionalism and were better equipped to meet the challenges of teaching during the pandemic. This adaptability, Zepeda concludes, is now a defining characteristic of world-class teachers.

3. Research Methodology

This study aims to explore the requirements, steps, and challenges faced by teachers working outside Indonesia and striving to become world-class educators. To achieve this, a qualitative research design was chosen, as it allows for a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, perspectives, and insights. This research adopts a case study design, which is particularly suitable for examining in-depth the experiences and challenges of individual teachers working in different international contexts. The case study approach enables a detailed exploration of the participants' professional development journeys, including the steps they have taken to reach their current positions and the obstacles they have encountered.

Methods

The primary method of data collection for this study is through semi-structured interviews, supplemented by questionnaires. The semi-structured interviews allow for flexible and open-ended discussions with the participants, enabling the researcher to explore their personal experiences, views, and reflections on becoming a world-class teacher. The questionnaire, on

the other hand, provides structured data on the participants' qualifications, experiences, and challenges in their current teaching roles. Semi-structured Interviews were designed to explore the participants' professional journey, key milestones in their career development, and the specific challenges they have faced in their international teaching roles. The questionnaire provided a structured format to gather demographic information, educational background, language proficiency, teaching experience, and current professional responsibilities. The questionnaire also asked participants to self-assess their professional competencies and reflect on the steps they have taken to enhance their qualifications and skills.

Participants
Two participants were selected for this case study, both of whom were Indonesian teachers currently working abroad in different educational roles. The first participant, referred to as Arianti, was employed a university in Cambodia, where she trained local teachers. The second participant, referred to as Aria, works as a Regional Manager at a school of business in South Korea, teaching beginner teachers. Both participants have a strong educational background and international teaching experience, making them ideal subjects for understanding the journey toward becoming a world-class teacher.

Data Analysis
The data collected from the interviews and questionnaires were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis involved transcription, coding, theme development, data nterpretation, and data validation to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, member checking was used. After analyzing the data, a summary of the findings was shared with the participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations and to allow them to add any further insights or corrections.

3. Findings
The findings of this study highlight key requirements, challenges, and strategies for teachers working outside Indonesia, aiming to become world-class educators.

Requirements for working abroad
The participants outlined several essential qualifications for working in international education settings. One participant emphasized that professional experience, with a minimum of 10 years in international contexts, is crucial. Additionally, extensive training in educational management, data analysis, and understanding complex educational systems and bureaucracy is necessary. On the other hand, the second participant noted that proficiency in English and familiarity with the higher education sector are fundamental, with no specific training required to secure such a position. The participant emphasized that their job opportunities were primarily a result of strong qualifications, including an impressive educational background and extensive professional experience. Notably, both participants stressed the importance of having a multicultural mindset, which is cultivated through exposure to diverse cultures and international experiences. The first participant's education in Australia and the second participant's international scholarships and professional exposure

have equipped them with the necessary cultural competence to thrive in multicultural settings.

Both participants cited their academic qualifications—master's degrees and overseas education—as key factors in meeting the stringent requirements for international positions. The first participant specifically cited her master's in Australia as an asset in preparing her for the multicultural environment she now works in. Similarly, the second participant's experiences in multicultural environments, including time spent in various countries due to academic and professional opportunities, were essential in preparing him for his current role.

Regarding the job acquisition process, the first participant secured her position through an open vacancy offered by the United Nations, while the second participant obtained his role via professional networking. Both participants indicated that their acceptance into their respective positions was due to their professional qualifications, with the first participant attributing her success to meeting all the required criteria, and the second participant highlighting his responsibility and professional demeanour.

The reasons for accepting jobs outside Indonesia were also discussed. Both participants were motivated by the desire to immerse themselves in new cultures, gain diverse experiences, meet professional challenges, and benefit from competitive salaries. One participant noted that the salary in Cambodia was sufficient for her living expenses, along with additional benefits. The second participant, although not receiving additional benefits, found his salary adequate for living in South Korea.

Cultural challenges

Cultural adaptation posed a notable challenge for the participants. The first participant, having worked in multicultural environments previously, did not experience significant cultural shock in her current role. She attributes her successful adaptation to maintaining an open-minded approach. Conversely, the second participant initially struggled with cultural shock but overcame it by observing his new surroundings and engaging with people from diverse backgrounds. His enthusiasm for his work helped him manage his initial nervousness.

Language barriers were another common challenge. Both participants experienced difficulties in communicating with local populations upon arrival. The first participant, after learning Khmer, developed a fair proficiency in the language, while the second participant, who started learning Korean, remains at a beginner level.

Working with colleagues and students

Both participants work in culturally diverse teams, and while the first participant encountered challenges with demotivated colleagues, she addressed this by focusing on capacity-building through direct, human-to-human approaches rather than relying solely on policies. In contrast, the second participant reported no significant issues with his colleagues, as they were cooperative and supportive.

When it comes to students, both participants shared positive experiences. The first participant described her students as high-spirited and eager to learn, despite facing poverty. She noted that the local culture places a high value on teachers, contributing to respectful and attentive student behavior. The second participant similarly reported that his students were enthusiastic about learning a new language and showed respect for their teachers.

Teaching Materials

Teaching materials presented varying levels of difficulty for the participants. The first participant found the materials challenging and adapted by creating her own instructional media, drawing from resources she had learned during her university education. She also employed inclusive teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning needs. The second participant, on the other hand, had no difficulty with the materials, as he was already familiar with the content.

Advice for aspiring world-class teachers
Both participants offered valuable advice for teachers aspiring to work internationally. The first participant emphasized the importance of thorough preparation and understanding the field before seeking opportunities abroad, as the challenges of working internationally can be overwhelming. She suggested that teachers should be mentally and professionally prepared to face these challenges. The second participant stressed the significance of attitude in multicultural teams. Respecting others, he suggested, is crucial for success in such diverse environments.

4. Conclusion
The findings of this study provide a detailed understanding of the requirements, challenges, and experiences of teachers working outside Indonesia. Both participants highlight the importance of qualifications, multicultural experience, and professional networks in securing international teaching positions. They also underscore the challenges of cultural adaptation, language barriers, and working with colleagues and students from diverse backgrounds. However, their success in navigating these challenges points to the value of open-mindedness, adaptability, and a strong sense of responsibility in becoming world-class educators. This study contributes valuable insights into the professional development of teachers working in global contexts and provides recommendations for those aspiring to enhance their careers through international teaching opportunities.

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