Challenges faced by elementary school teachers in the era of educational globalization

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ABSTRACT

Educational globalization is an unavoidable phenomenon in the development of modern education, bringing fundamental changes in the utilization of information and communication technology, the demands of 21st-century competencies, and shifts in students' values and character. These transformations pose increasingly complex challenges for elementary school teachers, who play a strategic role in shaping students' foundational knowledge, skills, attitudes, and character. This article aims to provide an integrative examination of the challenges faced by elementary school teachers in responding to educational globalization and to identify potential efforts to address these challenges. The study employs a qualitative descriptive literature review approach by analyzing fifteen national peer-reviewed journal articles published within the last five to seven years. The findings indicate that the challenges faced by elementary school teachers are multidimensional and interconnected, including limited mastery of instructional technology, transformations in pedagogical roles, increasing demands for professional and pedagogical competence, shifts in students' cultural values and character, and readiness to implement globally oriented curricula. The study further highlights that continuous professional development, supported by institutional and policy-level collaboration, is essential for enabling elementary school teachers to adapt, innovate, and perform effectively in the dynamic context of educational globalization.

Keyword: elementary school teachers; globalization of education; teacher challenges; teacher competencies

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a process characterized by increasingly open interactions and interconnections among countries across various domains of life, including education. In the educational context, globalization is reflected in the dissemination of global values, the adoption of international standards, and the rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT), all of which have significantly transformed teaching and learning systems in schools. These transformations have influenced curricula, instructional methods, learning resources, and, notably, the professional roles of teachers at the elementary school level (Styana, 2024).

Elementary education, as the foundational stage of formal schooling, plays a crucial role in shaping students' basic knowledge, skills, attitudes, and character. Elementary school teachers are not only responsible for delivering subject matter but also function as mentors, facilitators, motivators, and role models in students' daily lives. Within the context of educational globalization, teachers are expected to integrate digital learning technologies, foster 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, and simultaneously instill global values while preserving local cultural wisdom and national character (Tintis et al., 2024).

However, empirical studies indicate that many elementary school teachers continue to experience difficulties in responding effectively to the demands of educational globalization. Challenges such as limited mastery of instructional technology, low levels of digital literacy, insufficient access to continuous professional

development, and limited readiness to implement innovative learning practices remain prevalent (Silvester et al., 2023). Moreover, the rapid digitalization of students' social environments has led to changes in learners' behavior and character, including increased individualism, technology dependence, and emerging social issues such as cyberbullying, which further complicate teachers' pedagogical responsibilities at the elementary level (Yuanata, 2025).

Previous studies have extensively examined specific aspects of educational globalization, including teacher professionalism and ethical challenges in the global era (Radianti et al., 2024), the demands of 21st-century learning (Tintis et al., 2024), and character education through the integration of local wisdom (Jubaedah et al., 2025). Nevertheless, these studies tend to address the challenges faced by elementary school teachers in a fragmented manner, focusing on isolated dimensions rather than providing an integrative perspective that reflects the complexity of educational globalization at the elementary level.

Therefore, this article seeks to fill this gap by offering an integrative literature-based analysis of the multifaceted challenges faced by elementary school teachers in responding to educational globalization. Drawing on recent national studies, this article synthesizes technological, pedagogical, professional, and character-related dimensions to provide a more holistic understanding of teachers' challenges. This integrative perspective is expected to contribute to reflective academic discourse and serve as a conceptual reference for efforts to strengthen the quality of elementary education in the global era.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive literature review approach, which is appropriate for conceptual and analytical investigations of educational phenomena. This approach allows researchers to systematically interpret and synthesize findings from existing studies without statistical generalization, focusing instead on meaning, patterns, and thematic relationships within the literature (Elfrianto & Lesmana, 2022; Sugiyono, 2019).

The literature review focuses on national peer-reviewed journal articles that examine educational globalization, the roles and competencies of elementary school teachers, 21st-century learning, and teacher professionalism in the global era. The data sources consisted of 15 peer-reviewed national journal articles published within the last five to seven years, selected to ensure relevance to contemporary educational contexts.

Article selection was guided by specific inclusion criteria: (1) relevance to educational globalization within the context of elementary education, (2) explicit discussion of teachers' roles, competencies, or professional challenges, and (3) publication in accredited or peer-reviewed educational journals. Articles that did not specifically address elementary education or lacked a clear focus on teacher-related issues were excluded to maintain analytical rigor.

Data analysis was conducted through a systematic process involving several stages. First, relevant articles were identified and reviewed to capture key concepts and findings. Second, the findings were categorized based on major thematic dimensions, including mastery of instructional technology, shifts in teachers' roles, demands for professional and pedagogical competencies, and the development of students' character in the global era. Finally, thematic comparisons were carried out across the selected studies, and the results were synthesized and presented systematically to provide a comprehensive and coherent overview of the challenges faced by elementary school teachers in responding to educational globalization.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
A. Educational Globalization and Its Implications for Elementary Schools

Educational globalization is characterized by the increasing integration of digital technology in learning processes, the adoption of competency-based curricula, and the growing emphasis on 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. These developments reflect global educational trends that require learners to be not only academically competent but also adaptable and socially responsive to complex global challenges (Styana, 2024).

As the foundational level of formal education, elementary schools play a strategic role in preparing students with essential competencies that form the basis for lifelong learning. At this stage, students develop fundamental cognitive abilities, learning habits, and social behaviors that significantly influence their future educational trajectories. Consequently, the impact of educational globalization at the elementary level is particularly critical, as it shapes both academic achievement and character formation from an early age.

The implications of educational globalization extend beyond the integration of technology to include substantial shifts in instructional paradigms. Learning is no longer centered solely on rote memorization but increasingly emphasizes higher-order thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and meaningful social

interaction. Instructional approaches such as collaborative learning, inquiry-based learning, and project-based activities have become more prevalent as schools respond to global educational standards (Tintis et al., 2024). These approaches require elementary school teachers to design learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate while remaining contextually relevant and pedagogically meaningful.

B. *Challenges Faced by Elementary School Teachers in Responding to Educational Globalization*

1) Mastery of Instructional Technology

Mastery of instructional technology constitutes one of the most significant challenges faced by elementary school teachers in the era of educational globalization. Teachers are increasingly expected to integrate digital devices, interactive media, and online learning platforms into classroom instruction to enhance learning effectiveness and student engagement. However, disparities in teachers' age, professional background, and access to professional training have resulted in unequal levels of digital competence.

Several studies indicate that although some teachers are able to employ digital tools to support innovative and interactive learning, many others continue to rely on conventional instructional practices due to limited digital literacy and inadequate training opportunities (Silvester et al., 2023). This condition is further reinforced by findings that emphasize the urgency of digital competence as a prerequisite for innovative teaching practices in contemporary classrooms (Abrar et al., 2025). As a result, limited technological mastery constrains teachers' ability to fully implement learner-centered and technology-enhanced instruction in elementary education.

2) Changes in Teachers' Roles

Educational globalization has also led to a fundamental transformation in teachers' roles, shifting from teacher-centered approaches toward student-centered learning. In this paradigm, teachers are no longer positioned as the sole sources of knowledge but act as facilitators who guide students in accessing, processing, and applying information independently.

In elementary education, this role transformation presents distinct challenges, as teachers must balance the promotion of student autonomy with the developmental needs of young learners. Teachers are required to provide structured guidance while fostering exploration, collaboration, and critical thinking. Studies on active learning implementation demonstrate that instructional models emphasizing student participation—such as inquiry-based learning and interactive reading strategies—can enhance students' comprehension and engagement when properly facilitated by teachers (Elfrianto et al., 2020; Arsianti et al., 2025). However, adapting to these new roles requires a shift in pedagogical mindset, which can be challenging for teachers accustomed to traditional instructional practices.

3) Demands for Professional and Pedagogical Competence

Elementary school teachers are required to continuously enhance their professional, pedagogical, social, and personal competencies in response to the demands of educational globalization. Teachers must understand competency-based curricula, apply innovative instructional models, and implement authentic assessment strategies that evaluate both learning processes and outcomes comprehensively.

Research highlights that these demands often place considerable pressure on teachers, particularly those with limited experience in curriculum reform and pedagogical innovation (Agustina et al., 2023). Moreover, the implementation of innovative learning models—such as cooperative learning techniques and visual-based instructional strategies—requires strong instructional planning and assessment skills to ensure meaningful learning outcomes (Sianipar et al., 2025; Marbun et al., 2025). Without continuous professional support, teachers may struggle to meet these expanding professional expectations.

4) Shifts in Students' Cultural Values and Character

The rapid advancement of digital technology and the increasing influence of global culture have also affected students' values, attitudes, and character development. Exposure to global media content can reshape students' social behaviors, leading to challenges such as reduced social sensitivity, increased individualism, and diminished respect for local cultural values.

Elementary school teachers face significant challenges in instilling moral values, ethical behavior, and national character amid these global influences. Studies emphasize that character education remains a fundamental component of elementary education and must be consistently integrated into daily learning activities (Jubaedah et al., 2025). Inclusive and values-based learning environments have been identified as effective means of promoting social awareness and respect for diversity within the classroom (Nasution, 2025).

C. *Efforts to Address the Challenges of Educational Globalization*

To respond effectively to the challenges of educational globalization, elementary school teachers must engage in continuous professional development. Enhancing digital literacy, optimizing the use of instructional technology, and developing innovative and student-centered teaching methods are strategic measures that support teachers' adaptability to global educational demands. Professional development initiatives focusing on practical pedagogical skills have been shown to contribute positively to improvements in teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Agustina et al., 2023).

Furthermore, institutional support from schools and government authorities plays a crucial role in strengthening teachers' professional capacity. Supportive educational policies, adequate infrastructure, and structured training programs are essential for creating an enabling environment for instructional innovation. School leadership, in particular, has been identified as a key factor in fostering collaborative learning cultures and enhancing teacher performance (Tanjung et al., 2025; Pitdianti et al., 2024). Synergistic collaboration among teachers, schools, and government institutions is therefore essential for developing high-quality elementary education that is adaptive, sustainable, and responsive to the challenges of educational globalization.

4. CONCLUSION

Educational globalization has a profound impact on the roles and responsibilities of elementary school teachers, reshaping not only instructional practices but also the broader professional expectations placed upon educators at the foundational level of schooling. This study demonstrates that the challenges faced by elementary school teachers in the global era are multidimensional and interconnected, encompassing mastery of instructional technology, transformations in pedagogical roles, increasing demands for professional and pedagogical competence, and the responsibility to foster students' character amid rapidly changing social and cultural influences.

Based on an integrative synthesis of recent national studies, the findings indicate that these challenges cannot be addressed in isolation. Limited technological competence, for instance, may hinder the effective implementation of student-centered learning, while insufficient professional development constrains teachers' capacity to respond to curriculum reform and character education demands. Therefore, continuous and contextually relevant professional development emerges as a critical foundation for enabling teachers to adapt, innovate, and sustain pedagogical effectiveness in the context of educational globalization.

Furthermore, this study highlights that individual teacher efforts alone are insufficient to respond to the complexity of global educational demands. Institutional support through school leadership, supportive policies, adequate infrastructure, and structured professional development systems is essential in strengthening teachers' professional capacity. Collaborative synergy among teachers, schools, and government authorities is thus crucial for fostering high-quality elementary education that is adaptive, sustainable, globally responsive, and firmly rooted in local values and national character.

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