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'Stop corrupting our children!': the backlash against global competence

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ABSTRACT

This study examines global competence (GC) course implementation in Kazakhstan's mainstream schools and explores stakeholder perceptions and implementation challenges. A qualitative approach was employed, including curriculum analysis, thematic analysis of parental feedback, and surveys of in-service teachers. The results showed that teachers value GC but face barriers such as insufficient training and unclear guidelines. Parents oppose the course, fearing cultural erosion and curriculum overload. Thus, successful integration requires enhanced teacher training, transparent stakeholder engagement, and a balanced curriculum integrating global and national perspectives. These findings inform policies and practices for embedding GC within Kazakhstan and similar post-Soviet contexts.

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Introduction

In an era of rapid globalisation, the integration of global competence (GC) into national education systems has emerged as both a necessity and a challenge. Designed to equip students with skills such as intercultural communication, critical thinking, and civic responsibility to navigate interconnected global realities, GC has become popular among international organisations and education policymakers (Asia Society and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2018). However, global framework implementation varies widely, particularly in contexts where national identity and centralised governance remain dominant.

International organisations shape GC education by developing competency frameworks, providing funding, creating educational tools, promoting assessments, and monitoring progress (Briga et al. 2023). Nevertheless, variations in implementation exist because of differences in educational governance structures and/or multiple stakeholders particularly in decentralised systems such as in Brazil, Canada, and the United States.

Kazakhstan is a unique case study of the global landscape. With a highly centralised education system and Soviet-era ideology, the country offers insight into how global education agendas are localised within national structures. GC engagement intensified after the OECD's (2018) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) formally included GC as a measurable domain. In response, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Education introduced a dedicated GC course in mainstream schools to align with international standards while cultivating critical skills among

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students. However, its implementation has been uneven, influenced by resource availability, institutional readiness, and teacher capacity.

Therefore, parental resistance is a significant barrier. Public protests and petitions against the course reflect widespread concerns that the GC is promoting Western values at the expense of traditional Kazakh identity. This resistance underscores the deeper tension between global educational initiatives and national cultural and political priorities, contributing to global perspectives' limited integration within the education system.

Teacher preparedness further complicates implementation. Successfully implementing GC curricula depends on both policy and curricular reforms and on teachers' capacity to deliver globally oriented content. Many educators are ill-equipped to integrate global perspectives, highlighting the need for effective professional development. Such training should provide teachers with knowledge on global issues, strategies for incorporating diverse viewpoints, and tools to foster critical thinking (Guo 2014; Longview Foundation 2008). Without this support, the impact of GC education is significantly diminished.

Importantly, Kazakhstan's experiences are not isolated. Across both progressive and traditional education systems (i.e. in South Korea, Australia, and Singapore), GC integration has often encountered resistance rooted in neoliberal, nationalist, or ideological discourses (Gaudelli 2009; Tye 2014) where educators face epistemological uncertainties and institutional barriers. These patterns contextualise Kazakhstan's challenges and reinforce the need to examine how local and global logic intersect in curriculum reform.

The post-Soviet context adds another layer of complexity. Kazakhstan's education system bears imprints of centralised control, uniformity, and ideological conformity (Silova 2010; Yakavets, Frost, and Khoroshash 2017). Although the past decade has seen curriculum modernisation, including a shift toward student-centred learning, differentiated instruction, and criterion-based assessment, rote learning and top-down reform still constrain transformative changes (Baikenov 2020). GC resistance also reflects anxiety about cultural preservation and the perceived dilution of national values.

This case is particularly relevant for understanding education reform across Central Asia, where countries such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan face similar obstacles, including insufficient teacher training, curriculum overload, and public mistrust rooted in nationalism (Babaniyazova et al. 2024; Joldoshalieva 2007). While GC has been explored in the United States, Europe, and parts of Asia (Nopas and Kerdsoomboon 2024; Parmigiani et al. 2022; Tichnor-Wagner et al. 2019) little research addresses its implementation in post-Soviet contexts. This omission is especially critical, given the centralised education systems and strong cultural identity frameworks that characterise many countries in the region.

Kazakhstan, a unique hybrid of modernisation and traditionalism, offers a timely and underexplored lens to examine how GC curricula are introduced and received. This study investigates the implementation of a GC course in Kazakhstan by asking:

1. Curriculum Alignment: To what extent does the GC curriculum align with Kazakhstan's national education goals and GC framework?
2. Stakeholder Perceptions: What are parents' perceptions of and concerns about the integration of the GC course into the national curriculum?
3. Teacher Preparedness: How do in-service teachers understand GC and what challenges do they face in implementing it in their teaching practices?

By exploring these questions, this study illuminates how Kazakhstan's education system can effectively implement GC education while navigating the cultural, historical, and structural challenges that shape its adoption.

Theoretical framework: negotiating global competence and national identity

GC integration into national education systems has emerged as a defining challenge for twenty-first-century curriculum reforms. The OECD (2018) defines GC as the ability to examine global and intercultural issues, appreciate diverse perspectives, engage in open and respectful dialogue, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being. These dimensions are central to the OECD 2030 Learning Compass, which promotes the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values essential for thriving in an interconnected world (OECD 2019a). In this study, the OECD framework serves as an evaluative lens for curriculum analysis and a foundation for designing teachers' professional development.

However, applying this framework across diverse national contexts is challenging, particularly when reconciling global ideals with entrenched cultural, political, and ideological norms. Mansilla and Jackson (2011) deepen this framework by emphasising that GC is not merely a skills-based construct but integrates disciplinary knowledge, analytical reasoning, and ethical orientation, and stressing the importance of authentic global learning as a careful balance between universal civic principles and respect for national/local narratives and cultural specificities.

However, achieving this balance is rarely straightforward. Chandir and Blackmore (2024) demonstrate that many education systems adopt GC terminology superficially yet struggle to enact it through local pedagogical or curricular practices. In the Chinese context, Li (2019) highlights how definitional ambiguity impedes coherent policy implementation and curriculum development. He calls for global learning assessments to track competencies (i.e. intercultural awareness and civic responsibility) while emphasising local adaptation. Deng (2025) emphasises how institutional misalignment and competing national priorities obstruct implementation, revealing the structural hurdles faced when global ideals are filtered through rigid national systems. Abazov (2021) examined Kazakhstan's higher education sector, where adopting global citizenship education intersects with post-Soviet civic narratives and the legacies of centralised control. His findings underline that GC must be critically localised in post-socialist settings, where global norms often clash with entrenched ideological structures.

Educational theorists argue that globalisation does not uniformly erode national identity, rather it sets off a dialogic negotiation between global and local logic. For example, Mavroudi and Holt (2015) portray schools as battlegrounds for nationalist and cosmopolitan discourses, and Sautereau and Faas (2023) highlight how national curricula in France and Ireland reflect ongoing ideological contestations over citizenship and civic identity. A more pedagogically grounded interpretation is found in Enslin (2011), who explores the friction between patriotic and cosmopolitan imperatives in global education. Goren, Maxwell, and Yemini (2019) extend this to teacher identity, revealing how professional dissonance emerges when educators are asked to uphold divergent civic values. These insights resonate with this study's participants, many of whom described feelings caught between the institutional imperatives for national cultural preservation and curricular demands to foster globally competent learners.

These perspectives frame GC not as a universally agreed-upon model but as a negotiated, context-sensitive construct shaped by ideological contestation, institutional mediation, and professional identity formation.

Kazakhstan's education system and the challenges of global competence reform

Kazakhstan's education system has transformed significantly since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, adapting to political, economic, and sociocultural shifts driven by globalisation. Pre-1991, the curriculum was standardised via Soviet state-approved textbooks to align with state ideology and political narratives, emphasising science and mathematics while integrating Marxist-Leninist philosophy into humanities and social sciences (Duman 2024). Learning was based on rote memorisation, discouraging critical thinking and independent analysis, ensuring

students absorbed and reproduced state-approved doctrine (Yakovets 2014). Even scientific education was shaped by ideological priorities, distancing Kazakhstan from its national values and cultural heritage (Yildirim and Buluç 2022). Thus, post-1991 Kazakhstan sought to modernise and nationalise its curriculum to reflect its cultural identity while aligning with international standards. Since the 2000s, increased financial support from international sources and efforts to reduce dependence on Russian-influenced systems have facilitated a successful integration into the global educational framework (Duman 2024). Departing from the rigid Soviet model towards Western standards, the modern education system emphasises individuality, diversified learning opportunities, and flexible career choices, enhancing educational quality by increasing student engagement.

Despite ongoing modernisation efforts, Kazakhstan continues to face significant challenges regarding educational quality – reflected in its international assessment performance. In the 2018 PISA, Kazakhstan ranked 69th out of 79 participating countries, falling well below the OECD average (OECD 2019b). PISA 2018 introduced GC as a new assessment domain, highlighting its growing international emphasis. A persistent issue is the stark disparity between urban and rural schools, a trend consistently reported in PISA studies (OECD 2014, 2023) that underscores deeper systemic barriers such as uneven resource distribution and education financing inefficiencies.

Beyond structural challenges, Kazakhstan struggled with instructional effectiveness and cultivating students' higher-order thinking. Although the system effectively delivers theoretical content, it does not foster critical, applied, and problem-based learning (Bokayev 2016; OECD 2014). Findings from PISA and TIMSS reveal that students perform recall-based tasks well but struggle with complex reasoning and applications. A key barrier is the academically overloaded curriculum, which restricts opportunities for deep learning (Bokayev 2016). These issues are especially acute in rural and ungraded schools, where many institutions fail to meet national standards (OECD 2014).

Responding to these challenges, Kazakhstan seeks to implement targeted reforms aimed at bridging gaps in educational quality and promoting competencies necessary for the twenty-first century. One such initiative is the GC course introduction, designed to align with global education trends and equip students with essential skills for career readiness. This course was introduced by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MoE RK) as an elective in the 2021–2022 academic year. It became compulsory in 2022 for Grades 5–9 in mainstream and vocational schools (ANA 2021; MoE RK 2022) while adoption by private institutions remains voluntary. All participating schools use a ministry-standardised curriculum and methodological guidance, which outlines unit plans, learning outcomes, and recommended resources. The medium of instruction corresponds to the school's primary language (Kazakh, Russian, or English). Teachers must complete specialised training through the National Center for Professional Development (NCPD) 'Orleu.' While the government envisioned the course as a step toward fostering global competitiveness, public concern emerged regarding its influence on cultural values, particularly gender equality and social issues. Many parents expressed their opposition on public platforms and submitted requests to the Committee for Quality Assurance in the Sphere of Education (Ministry of Education) to remove the subject.

To address stakeholder concerns, the Altynsarin National Academy (ANA) of Education, a research centre under the Ministry of Education and the official developer of the course, clarified that the GC curriculum focuses on career readiness and essential twenty-first-century skills and has been revised considering teachers', parents', and educators' concerns (ANA 2021; MoE RK 2022). Nonetheless, this opposition reflects a broader challenge in Kazakhstan's education system, where traditional values and past ideological influences continue shaping public perceptions of educational reform. According to the ANA's (2021) instructional and methodological letter, schools must create an environment that nurtures students' global competitiveness. Introducing the GC course aligns with this vision; however, the success of the course and broader curriculum reforms, relies heavily on teacher preparedness and meaningful collaboration among stakeholders.

Briga et al. (2023) emphasise that teachers must understand the origins and context of the materials they use to evaluate, integrate, and advocate GC education effectively. Without this

foundational knowledge, reforms risk being superficial rather than meaningfully implemented. Yakavets et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of continuous professional development in Kazakhstan's school reforms. While teachers have attended training sessions, many found them overly theoretical and lacking practical guidance in lesson planning and resource management. Fragmented, rushed, and top-down training has had little impact on classroom practices and teachers' beliefs (Cuban 2013).

These systemic and pedagogical challenges form the backdrop of the GC course's introduction and are central to this study's examination of its alignment with both global and national educational priorities.

Methodology

Research design

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine how GC is implemented and perceived in Kazakhstan's educational system. Three complementary methods were used: document analysis of the official GC curriculum, thematic analysis of parental feedback, and pre- and post-surveys of in-service teachers.

This study was grounded in an interpretivist approach, recognising that educational change is shaped by complex cultural, institutional, and ideological factors. The data sources were triangulated to capture diverse stakeholder perspectives and validate the findings. The lead researcher, a Kazakhstani educator with extensive experience in curriculum development and teacher training, brought contextual expertise to the study. To enhance credibility and reduce bias, the data coding and interpretation were discussed and cross-reviewed with other members of the research team.

The research team included local and international scholars, offering insider and comparative perspectives. A thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2013) six-phase model: (1) familiarisation, (2) code generation, (3) theme development, (4) theme review, (5) theme naming, and (6) final analysis. Coding combines inductive insights from participant data and deductive categories derived from theoretical models of GC (Mansilla and Jackson 2011; OECD 2018).

Participants

In-service teachers

In total, 22 in-service teachers voluntarily participated in an 8-h professional development workshop on GC. The seminar was hosted by the NCPD 'Orleu' as part of a formal collaboration with the research team, based on an existing memorandum of understanding. Teachers registered for the workshop through Orleu's National Professional Development Platform and were not selected by the researchers. All participants were teaching the GC course in mainstream schools, making their perspectives directly relevant to the study. This group included educators from both urban (90%) and rural (10%) schools with diverse teaching experiences and educational backgrounds (see Table 1). The gender distribution reflects Kazakhstan's broader educational workforce, comprising mostly female teachers (OECD 2019c).

Workshop design and facilitation

An 8-h professional development workshop was co-designed and facilitated by the research team in partnership with the NCPD 'Orleu.' The workshop consisted of three modules: GC theoretical foundations, curriculum integration strategies, and classroom-based applications. The sessions were interactive and included lectures, collaborative discussions, role-plays, and scenario-based tasks. The content was based on internationally recognised models (OECD 2018) and adapted

Table 1. Demographics and general information.

Demographic category	Subcategories	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>	Female	92%
	Male	8%
<i>Age</i>	Under 25	8%
	25–30	42%
	31–45	33%
	Over 46	17%
<i>Teaching Experience</i>	Less than 1 year	5%
	1–5 years	20%
	6–10 years	15%
	11–20 years	30%
	Over 20 years	30%
<i>Education</i>	Bachelor's Degree	75%
	Master's Degree	25%
<i>School Location</i>	Urban	90%
	Rural	10%

for local educational contexts. All the facilitators were experienced educators or curriculum developers with advanced degrees in education and teacher training.

Data collection and analysis

To address RQ1 on curriculum alignment, document analysis was conducted using the official GC curricula for Grades 5–11 obtained from the ANA. The analysis focused on learning objectives, thematic content, and implementation strategies, particularly key elements such as cultural diversity, critical thinking, and GC. The research team independently examined the curriculum content and structure using the alignment criteria informed by the OECD (2018, 2019a) GC Framework and Kazakhstan's national educational priorities.

For RQ2, 41 parents' comments were collected from a public e-government platform and analysed thematically to capture recurring concerns about ideology, academic pressure, and curriculum transparency.

For RQ3, pre- and post-workshop open-ended surveys were administered to participating teachers. The questions focused on GC understanding, perceived implementation challenges, and support needs. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym for anonymity. Responses were thematically coded and cross-validated by two researchers to enhance reliability. Themes were synthesised across data sources to develop a comprehensive narrative that highlights alignment gaps, stakeholder concerns, and opportunities for policy and pedagogical reform.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the university where the study was conducted. All teacher participants provided informed consent; data anonymity and confidentiality were ensured using pseudonyms. Public parental comments were analysed in accordance with the ethical guidelines for publicly accessible data. No identifiable information is disclosed.

Results

Global competence course analysis

The GC course is designed for grades 5–9 and 10–11, encompassing both middle and high school levels (see Appendix 1). This course represents a significant initiative aimed at equipping students with essential skills such as critical thinking, tolerance, research abilities, and financial literacy.

Aligned with the OECD 2030 education goals, the course content emphasises critical thinking, media literacy, environmental awareness, and cooperative skills, structured considering students' developmental stages to ensure seamless progression and a gradual deepening of knowledge. The curriculum promotes civic responsibility, respect for Kazakhstan's constitution and laws, and appreciation of national culture and traditions. However, to fully align with international standards, the programme should enhance global dimensions, particularly cultural interactions, respect for world diversity, and preparation for living in a multicultural world.

Currently, the course takes initial steps toward addressing cultural diversity but remains focused on fostering local national identity. For instance, middle school topics such as 'Proud of My Motherland' and 'We Are One People,' prioritise developing national pride and cultural awareness. While supporting national goals, critical global themes such as international cooperation, migration crises, climate change, and international human rights remain underrepresented or superficially covered. This limited global context reduces students' preparedness for international engagement and intercultural understanding. Additionally, although active learning methods are incorporated, practical implementation suffers from inadequate resources, such as insufficient interactive digital platforms, teaching guides and training, and illustrative international case studies; participating educators explicitly echo these concerns.

Strengths, limitations, and recommendations for improvement are identified based on document analysis and stakeholder feedback. Recommendations explicitly linked to each limitation include integrating practical projects directly connected to international initiatives, structured debates, volunteer campaigns, and the use of robust digital resources and international collaboration (see Table 2).

Parental feedback analysis

Parental perspectives on the GC course were analysed using publicly available comments collected from an e-government platform. Three primary concerns emerged through thematic analysis:

Table 2. Summary of strengths, limitations, and recommendations for improving the GC course.

Category	Key points
Strengths	
<i>Systematic Approach to Learning</i>	Age-appropriate content design ensures gradual skill progression. Grades 5–9 focus on foundational knowledge and social skills, whereas Grades 10–11 emphasise practical applications.
<i>Development of Global Thinking</i>	Inclusion of global issues and intercultural topics helps students understand global interconnectedness.
<i>Practical Orientation</i>	Project-based tasks enhance research, analytical, and presentation skills. Topics like entrepreneurship and financial literacy in senior grades support independent living skills.
<i>Value-Based Foundation</i>	Emphasises tolerance, respect for cultural diversity, and acceptance of different perspectives, aligning with international standards of global competence.
Limitations	
<i>Limited Global Context</i>	Strong emphasis on local content limits comprehensive coverage of global issues. Grades 5–9 focus on patriotism rather than global competence, reducing students' international preparedness. Specific global challenges are overlooked in Grades 10–11.
<i>Imbalance Between Theory and Practice</i>	Topics addressing global challenges, ecological awareness, and social responsibility lack practical depth and implementation guidance.
<i>Lack of Flexibility in Global Content</i>	Despite adaptations to national characteristics, the curriculum insufficiently incorporates international standards and examples, potentially isolating students from broader global contexts.
Recommendations for Improvement	
<i>Strengthening the Global Component</i>	Introduce practical tasks and projects explicitly linked to international initiatives and pressing global issues. Include specific global case studies on human rights, international trade, climate action, and sustainable development.
<i>Practical Orientation</i>	Expand hands-on activities (volunteer campaigns, structured debates on global issues, and collaborative projects) with international schools or organisations.
<i>Integration of Digital Technologies</i>	Incorporate digital learning resources such as online courses, interactive webinars, and simulation-based activities focused on global competence themes.

cultural and ideological apprehension, curriculum overload, and mistrust in course development and implementation. The themes and supporting quotations represent the parental feedback.

Cultural and ideological concerns

Many parents strongly opposed the course, saying it challenges traditional moral, religious, and national values. Concerns centred on the belief that the course promotes ideologies misaligned with Kazakhstan's cultural and societal norms. Several parents feared that topics such as gender diversity, globalism, and human rights would introduce conflicting values with their own. One parent stated, *I support ethics, morality, and family values (mom + dad), not the degradation of our children or the imposition of international values.* Others saw the course as an external imposition designed to undermine national identity and traditional family structures.

Some comments reflected strong emotional reactions, with parents warning against perceived foreign influences. For example, *This subject promotes Western ideologies that have no place in our schools. We need to protect our children from this unnecessary interference.* Another echoed this, claiming that the course *undermines religious values and replaces them with ideas that are not part of our traditions.* These statements illustrate a broader fear that GC education could erode local customs and long-standing cultural beliefs. A particularly strong reaction came from a parent who exclaimed, *Stop corrupting our children with your gender ideologies and forced tolerance for non-traditional orientations!* Another added, *This is brainwashing! We do not need foreign influence dictating how we raise our children.*

Some parents even threatened legal action, underscoring the intensity of their opposition; *Immediately remove Global Competence. This is the corruption of minors in schools. All parents will file complaints with the prosecutor's office against you.* Another wrote, *I DO NOT WANT my child's orientation to be 'changed' within the school curriculum!*

These responses highlight the depth of concern that the course threatens traditional values and moral structures.

Curriculum and academic burden

Many parents opposed the course because of the academic pressure on students, feeling that Kazakhstan's school curriculum was already overloaded and adding another compulsory subject would further strain students. One parent commented, *Children are already struggling with unnecessary subjects. We need fewer subjects, not more!* Another criticised the Ministry of Education for expanding the curriculum, arguing that *instead of introducing new topics, they should improve existing subjects like math and science.*

Beyond concerns about workload, some parents highlighted the financial burden associated with additional coursework. Many reported paying for supplementary tutoring to help children cope with demanding academic requirements and viewed the introduction of GC as an unnecessary expense. One parent remarked, *We are already spending extra money on tutors because children cannot keep up with their current subjects. Now they want to add more?*

Many also viewed the subject as irrelevant, arguing that it did not contribute to students' real-world skills. One parent stated, *We need subjects that actually prepare children for life, not vague concepts that have no real-world application.* Another argued, *Instead of teaching this nonsense, make basic medicine or finance courses mandatory. That would actually help students.*

These concerns reflect both ideological resistance and a broader frustration with the perceived inefficiency and irrelevance of the current education system.

Mistrust in course development and implementation

Parents expressed significant scepticism about the development and implementation of the course, particularly the perceived lack of transparency in the decision-making process. Many felt excluded from discussions and criticised education authorities for not consulting local communities. One parent questioned the course's legitimacy, asking, *Who approved this? Were parents consulted at*

all? Another criticised the perceived foreign influence; *This course was developed without considering local traditions. It was imposed on us without any input from parents or teachers.*

Doubts extended to the course teachers' qualifications. Some parents were sceptical about whether educators had the necessary training to teach GC effectively. One parent remarked, *Psychologists and biology teachers are being asked to teach subjects they know nothing about.* Another commented, *If even the teachers don't fully understand this course, how can they explain it to students?*

Some parents dismissed the curriculum entirely, stating, *This is just another experiment on our children. Who wrote the expert conclusion? What criteria were used to assign this course to any specific field?* Others have described the subject as incoherent; *It's just a vinaigrette of random subjects with no clear purpose.* Another concern was its categorisation; *To which educational direction does Global Competence belong: humanities or natural sciences? It seems to fit nowhere.*

These remarks reflect a combination of mistrust, confusion, and dissatisfaction, highlighting the need for clearer communication, improved teacher training, and inclusive dialogue with stakeholders in future curricular reforms.

Teachers' perception analysis

Thematic analysis of teacher feedback before and after the professional development workshop revealed substantial growth in participants' conceptualisation of GC. To enhance clarity and reflect individual voices, pseudonyms (e.g. Teacher A) were used.

Pre-workshop perspectives

Before the workshop, most teachers associated GC with general skills such as problem solving, collaboration, and adaptability. For example, Teacher A (urban, 5–10 years of experience) described it as *the ability to act on global issues and find solutions through collaboration.* Teacher B (urban, under 30 years) emphasised critical thinking; *critical thinking to address global and cultural challenges.*

A clear disparity in familiarity was observed between the groups. Teacher C (urban, master's degree) had some background in GC, stating, *I attended courses that covered ecological, moral, and cultural topics.* Comparatively, Teacher D (rural, over 20 years) shared, *I have had no formal training on global competence.* These examples reflect a broader divide: urban and early career teachers are more likely to have encountered GC-related content through academic or professional programmes, whereas rural and veteran teachers often lack exposure.

The teachers also varied in their self-assessed readiness. Teacher E (urban, 11–20 years) expressed confidence in promoting global perspectives: *I try to guide students toward seeing problems from multiple cultural viewpoints.* On the other hand, Teacher F (rural, 1–5 years) admitted: *Without proper materials or training, I don't know how to bring global topics into my lessons.*

Common challenges include a lack of resources, rigid curricula, and difficulty in engaging students. Teacher G (urban, under 25 years) observed, *There are not enough materials available to teach global competence,* while Teacher H (rural, over 20 years) noted structural barriers: *How do we teach global challenges when we barely have time for the basics?* This reflects what Deng (2025) described as an institutional misalignment, where education systems adopt global frameworks but fail to provide the infrastructure or clarity needed for meaningful implementation.

Despite these limitations, most participants supported GC integration and emphasised the need for more resources and training. Teacher I (urban, 6–10 years) stated, *Workshops and online resources would help us make this real in our classrooms.*

Table 3 summarises the evolution of the teachers' perceptions before and after the workshops.

Post-workshop insights

After the workshop, the teachers demonstrated a deeper, more applied understanding of GC. Teacher J (urban, under 30) stated, *Global competence means the ability to study global and intercultural*

Table 3. Comparison of pre- and post-workshop themes on GC.

Survey focus	Pre-workshop themes	Post-workshop themes
<i>Understanding of Global Competence</i>	Problem-solving, collaboration, adaptability	Interdisciplinary thinking, cultural awareness, civic engagement
<i>Training Background</i>	University courses, workshops, lack of formal training	Increased demand for structured training, recognition of gaps
<i>Perceived Challenges</i>	Limited resources, curriculum constraints, student disengagement	Complex topics, research difficulty, real-world application
<i>Support Needed</i>	Digital tools, access to platforms, workshops	Media literacy tools, cognitive and emotional development resources
<i>Priority in Education</i>	Moderate priority; tied to curriculum updates	Strong consensus; critical for addressing global challenges

issues and to understand others' perspectives. Teacher K (rural, 11–20 years) emphasised decision-making: *It involves critical and rapid decision-making regarding global-level problems.*

Participants also reported a greater awareness of global issues and the role of education. Teacher L (urban, 11–20 years) remarked, *I learned how NGOs and governments work on climate change and equity—this helps me link lessons to real issues.*

However, the implementation challenges remain unresolved. Teacher M (urban, early career) noted, *Conducting research on causes, consequences, and potential actions is challenging*, while Teacher N (rural, over 20 years) stressed the need for better pedagogy: *We need better strategies to help students critically engage, not just memorize, content.* These comments echo what Enslin (2011) identifies as the tension between patriotic and cosmopolitan imperatives, where teachers, particularly in nationalised systems, struggle to teach globally oriented content in ways that align with entrenched civic narratives.

Teachers voiced strong support for prioritising GC in education, particularly in areas such as media literacy and climate change. Teacher O (urban, 11–20 years) commented, *It should become a priority by increasing students' interest, developing critical thinking about media, and building responsible navigation skills in the digital world.* Teacher P (rural, 11–20 years) added, *Changes in the global nature of issues, like climate change and the drying of water bodies, should be critically discussed through school subjects.*

Table 4 highlights the differences in strengths and challenges across teacher subgroups.

Discussion

The introduction of the GC course in Kazakhstan represents a significant step toward aligning the national curriculum with global educational priorities. However, its implementation has encountered several challenges, particularly in teacher preparedness, curriculum integration, and parental resistance. Although the course is based on international frameworks, that is, OECD 2030, it struggles to foster a global perspective effectively. National identity and patriotism are often prioritised over international interconnectedness, potentially hindering students' readiness for global engagement. Additionally, the course lacks a balanced approach between theory and practice, with insufficient hands-on activities to reinforce learning.

Table 4. Group comparison of teachers' perspectives on GC.

Group	Key strengths	Key challenges
<i>Urban Teachers</i>	Greater exposure to GC, deeper conceptual grasp, access to digital tools	Overloaded curriculum, limited time for interdisciplinary content
<i>Rural Teachers</i>	Strong interest in real-life application, community relevance	Lack of training, low resource availability, tech and infrastructure gaps
<i>Early-Career Teachers</i>	High openness to innovation and training	Inexperience with integrating GC, uncertainty in application
<i>Veteran Teachers</i>	Pedagogical expertise, confidence in class management	Hesitation toward new pedagogies, lower familiarity with GC frameworks

Parental resistance is a major obstacle to successfully implementing GC courses. Many parents perceive the course as a threat to their national identity, cultural preservation, and traditional family values. Some fear that it promotes foreign ideologies, while others criticise its vagueness and misalignment with local educational needs as well as its overloading of the curriculum. Many demand that it remain elective, not mandatory. These concerns highlight the broader challenge where GC is perceived and interpreted differently across cultures and stakeholders (Engel and Sizcek 2018).

This resistance reflects global debates on integrating international perspectives into national curricula, which often clash with traditional educational values and nationalist sentiments (Gaudelli 2009; Tye 2014). In Kazakhstan, opposition is further reinforced by the Soviet education system's legacy, which emphasised ideological conformity and national unity over global engagement (Deyoung and Balzhan 1997; Silova 2010). Addressing these concerns requires transparent communication about the course's objectives, active parental involvement in curriculum discussions, and reassurance that GC education complements rather than replaces national values.

Findings from the pre- and post-workshop surveys indicated that while teachers recognised GC's value, many lacked the training and resources necessary for its effective implementation. Before the workshop, teachers associated GC with problem solving, adaptability, and intercultural communication, but struggled with practical applications due to limited instructional materials and training opportunities. Post-workshop responses demonstrated a shift toward a more applied understanding, with teachers recognising GC's role in fostering civic engagement and international collaboration. However, concerns persist regarding student engagement, curriculum constraints, and insufficient institutional support. Without structured professional development and institutional support, efforts to integrate GC into classrooms risk being superficial and inconsistent (Briga et al. 2023).

While teacher challenges are common globally, Kazakhstan's centralised education system presents unique barriers. Unlike decentralised systems, where teachers have greater autonomy, Kazakhstan's system requires clear, structured policies and ongoing training to ensure effective implementation (Ayubayeva 2018). Past reforms, although largely viewed positively (Baikenov 2020), have been hindered by unclear guidelines, increased workloads, and rapid transitions, leaving many teachers unprepared. More gradual implementation can facilitate a smoother transition.

However, these challenges are not unique to Kazakhstan. In China, unclear guidelines and insufficient institutional support have hindered curriculum reform (Dello-Iacovo 2009). Similarly, many Kazakhstani teachers have had to adapt to changes with minimal guidance, often relying on outdated methods (Yakovets et al. 2023). Although educators recognise the benefits of the Renewed Content of Education, rushed implementation, poor communication, and limited resources have left them unprepared. Azhmukhambetov (2020) noted that policymakers often treat teachers as reform implementers rather than contributors, creating resistance and highlighting the need for better support and training to align reforms with teachers' perspectives.

International comparisons have highlighted the importance of structured implementation strategies. Countries with collaborative teaching networks such as Singapore and South Korea have successfully institutionalised GC education, contributing to their high PISA rankings (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Conversely, in less structured systems, such as the United States, teacher collaboration is less regulated, leading to inconsistencies. Similarly, Kazakhstan's bureaucratic school structure complicates the integration of new teaching methods, with teachers struggling to balance policy expectations and entrenched pedagogical norms (Grassick and Wedell 2018).

The successful integration of GC education requires close collaboration between policymakers, educators, and local authorities (Briga et al. 2023). In decentralised education systems, regional and local stakeholders play key roles in decision-making and implementation. Ensuring their involvement in national-level discussions allows for locally adaptable strategies, fosters ownership, and increases the likelihood of successful integration.

Teacher training is crucial for effective GC education. As an interdisciplinary concept spanning multiple subjects, GC must be incorporated into teacher training programmes (Slapac,

Coppersmith, and Cheng 2023). Embedding GC training within teacher preparation programmes (in content and pedagogy) can help educators develop the necessary skills to teach global topics effectively (Tichnor-Wagner et al. 2019).

Conclusion and recommendations

Kazakhstan's GC course is a valuable initiative; however, its success depends on addressing the challenges of teacher preparedness, parental resistance, and curriculum integration. Strengthening professional development, engaging stakeholders, and providing structured support are essential for equipping teachers to prepare students for global engagement.

Enhancing teacher training through professional development, digital resources, and peer collaboration will ensure the effective integration of GC into instruction. The curriculum should balance national and global perspectives with relevant case studies, while maintaining cultural relevance.

Building trust with stakeholders through transparent communication and curriculum discussions can address the concerns and highlight GC education benefits. Expanding practical learning through project-based activities, volunteer programmes, and international partnerships can provide students with real-world applications.

A phased implementation, starting with pilot programmes and incorporating feedback from educators and students, will enable smooth and necessary adjustments. These efforts will help to establish a sustainable and effective GC education framework for Kazakhstan.

Limitations

The study's reliance on qualitative methods, including document analysis, thematic coding, and open-ended surveys, limits the ability to generalise the findings or quantify the effectiveness of the GC course and workshop. Additionally, the sample was predominantly composed of urban teachers (90%) with rural educators representing only 10%, potentially underrepresenting the unique challenges and perspectives of rural schools.

Parental feedback was obtained from 41 publicly available comments on e-government platforms. Although these insights provide valuable perspectives, they may not fully reflect the views of parents across different regions and socioeconomic backgrounds in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, the study focused on teachers' and parents' perspectives without directly assessing student engagement or learning outcomes, key indicators of a course's overall impact. These limitations highlight the need for future research incorporating quantitative measures, a more diverse participant pool, and direct evaluation of student experiences.

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Appendix 1

Table A1. Global competence course (Grades 5–9).

Unit	Objectives	Contents
<i>Ethics and Etiquette</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop spiritual and moral qualities. 2. Cultivate adherence to etiquette and cultural norms of behaviour. 	Etiquette: greetings, farewells, everyday and festive behaviour, polite speech, telephone etiquette, table manners, academic honesty.
<i>Citizenship and Patriotism</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster critical and creative thinking in citizens. 2. Build a sense of responsibility for societal prosperity. 3. Encourage respect for history, culture, and national values. 	Family respect, love for the Motherland, civic responsibility, cultural diversity, national identity, history and achievements of Kazakhstan, participation in social initiatives and projects for the benefit of society.
<i>Media and Financial Literacy</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach critical consumption of information. 2. Instil financial responsibility. 3. Develop budgeting skills. 	Analysis of media content, recognising manipulation, basics of financial planning, safe online behaviour, personal finance management, risk prevention.
<i>Life Safety</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote a healthy lifestyle. 2. Develop hazard prevention skills. 3. Foster responsibility for health and safety. 	Personal hygiene, bullying prevention, safety in transportation, outdoor activities, online security, and emergency preparedness.
<i>Ecological Culture</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise awareness about environmental issues. 2. Encourage eco-friendly behaviours. 3. Motivate participation in conservation efforts. 	Waste segregation, energy saving, pollution prevention, natural resource restoration, participation in environmental campaigns
<i>Secularism and Religious Studies</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce the fundamentals of religious literacy. 2. Foster respect for religious diversity. 3. Warn against extremist movements. 	Religion's role in society, principles of secularism, Kazakhstan's religious diversity, combating extremism, and preventing destructive influences.

Table A2. Global competence course (Grades 10–11).

Unit	Objectives	Contents
<i>Global Competence</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the concept of global competence. 2. Develop planning and task distribution skills in projects. 3. Enhance information analysis skills. 	Core principles of global competence, project planning strategies, team role allocation, data collection methods, information analysis, and evaluation criteria.
<i>Exploration of Global Challenges</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate global challenges. 2. Develop argumentation and source evaluation skills. 3. Analyse local and global problem aspects. 	Social issues, inequality, conflict resolution strategies, environmental problems (climate change, pollution), project-based research.
<i>Understanding different worldviews</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyse diverse worldviews and cultural differences. 2. Build intercultural communication skills. 3. Learn citation and bibliography compilation. 	Respect for diverse perspectives, tolerance, cultural stereotypes, project work, and exploration of cultural differences.
<i>Intercultural communication</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster awareness of personal cultural identity. 2. Respect value systems of other cultures. 3. Analyse intercultural differences. 	Cultural identity formation, intercultural communication, analysis of stereotypes, and project-based learning.
<i>Sustainable development and well-being</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the significance of sustainable development. 2. Engage in local and global initiatives. 3. Improve project presentation skills. 	Collective well-being, participation in initiatives, global citizenship, and project presentations.
<i>Introduction to Entrepreneurship</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand entrepreneurship and marketing principles. 2. Build skills in business modelling and financial planning. 3. Foster creative thinking. 	Entrepreneurship basics, startup culture, market mechanisms, marketing strategies, financial planning, and expense management.
<i>Financial literacy</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan income and expenses. 2. Develop strategies for family budget management. 3. Create savings and financial safety skills. 	Income and expense planning, pocket money management, creating financial safety nets, family budgeting, passive income, and loan management.