

Book Review

Teacher Expertise in the Global South: Theory, Research and Evidence, by Jason Anderson. Cambridge University Press, 2023, 320 pp., USD 131.30 (hbk), ISBN 978-1-009-28485-1

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Teacher Expertise in the Global South: Theory, Research and Evidence is a comprehensive examination of teacher expertise that emphasises the imperative to identify expert teachers and document their practices in educational contexts, typically underrepresented in mainstream research, particularly within low-income countries of the global South. It addresses fundamental questions and significant gaps in understanding teacher expertise, particularly in classroom settings, drawing from previous research on effective teaching practices and expertise. It also covers methodological considerations for researching teacher expertise in countries with low socio-economic status (SES). In this seminal book, Jason Anderson presents findings from a detailed study adopting a critical realist framework that integrates context-specific insights and generalisable principles. The study was a part of his doctoral thesis, involving eight expert teachers teaching English at the secondary level of schools in India, a multilingual and multicultural country in the global South.

The book unfolds twelve chapters, each contributing to an understanding of teacher expertise with evidence from challenging and low-income contexts of the global South. Chapters 1 to 4 provide an introduction to the key terms, a review of existing research, and identifying research gaps. Chapter 1 begins by highlighting the gap in teacher expertise research in the global South, predominantly low to lower-middle-income educational contexts when contrasted to the abundance of studies in the USA, Western Europe, Australia etc. It underscores the bias present in the contexts of these studies within the existing research and the imperative to explore expertise in more challenging areas of the South. Chapter 2 discusses teacher expertise by providing a working definition of the key term, with an emphasis on context-specific competency and community-specific qualities. This enables flexibility in interpretations of certain core features relevant across local contexts. Chapters 3 and 4 offer a critical review of previous research, the former focuses on prior research on expert teachers, introduces the construct of the expert teacher prototype (Sternberg and Horvath, 1995) and critically examines its applicability in diverse educational settings. In continuation, Chapter 4 draws attention to the northern bias and sheds light on the challenges faced by teachers in the low-income context of the global South.

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Chapters 5 to 9 detail the exploratory research conducted by Anderson on teacher expertise in India as a part of his PhD program. These chapters report the practices and challenges faced by expert teachers in the global South. It provides insights that challenge the existing Northern-centric views and contribute to a deeper understanding of expert or effective teaching practices in this context. Chapter 5 details the design features, the selection of participants, methodological challenges and the participatory approach used in the study. An ethnographic profile of one of the eight expert teachers from Maharashtra, India, Nurjahan Naik Khwaja, covering her personal background, beliefs, translanguaging and teaching practices is covered in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 presents a comparative case study of the eight expert teachers using Stake's (2006) construct of 'quintain', following the narrative order as Chapter 6, highlighting similarities and contextual differences in their beliefs, teaching, translanguaging, reflective practices and a look into their engagement in continuous professional development (CPD). Chapter 8, explores the differences observed in teacher expertise, extending the cross-case analysis of the eight teachers by comparing two key variables: conception of subject (TEaL/TEaS) and degree of control to map their classroom practices.

In Chapter 9, to shed further understanding about the participant teacher's pedagogical practices, research findings are compared to attributes of expert teachers in the global North across twelve categories ranging from their knowledge base, cognitive processes, and pedagogical strategies to assessment practices and their implications within the Indian educational context are discussed. Interestingly, the study reports significant yet overlooked translanguaging practices of teachers in multilingual classrooms, with minimal to no evidence in prior teacher expertise research. The findings of the study document how the teachers effectively integrate the more enabled language (MEL) and use strategies like translations to support their language learning process. Towards a meaningful culmination, Chapter 10 presents a differentiated framework for understanding teacher expertise, based on the most frequently reported features of expert teachers' cognition and practice, regardless of context, and contextual variables that vary, with a special emphasis on potential Southern variation.

Chapters 11 and 12 propose practical applications to develop sustainable context-specific expertise and offer concluding reflections. Chapter 11 explores a significant discussion in the field of applied social science on 'Southern Theory' disseminated by Connell (2007, 2014) which refers to the social thought and knowledge originating from marginalised communities in the global South. Furthermore, Anderson positions the research conducted for the book as a contributor to practical Southern pedagogic theory. He discusses three prominent constructs from the study, such as the translanguaging theory, elicited completion and text interpretation. A hypothetical framework for developing an evidence-based, context-specific overview of teacher expertise is also outlined. Chapter 12 reflects on the central arguments, underlining the adaptability of teacher expertise to diverse contexts while drawing attention to the need and scope for further research on Southern teacher expertise.

Anderson highlights how education systems often undervalue teachers' contributions to improving educational quality in the global South. A transformative shift in understanding and evaluating teacher expertise is required and he is successful in that ordeal. The proposed differentiated framework to understand teacher expertise excels in its practical relevance since it is not restricted to only the global South, but can be used across diverse contexts. The book prompts the reader to challenge the notions and biases about effective teaching practices prevalent in the North. Most importantly, Anderson encourages by recognising expert teachers from challenging contexts of the global South who have developed sustainable and innovative teaching practices to suit the needs of multilingual young learners, contributing to context-specific pedagogy compared to their northern counterparts.

In conclusion, by integrating theory, research and evidence, this exceptionally well-written book is a valuable resource for educational research and practice. It is a significant milestone in teacher expertise research in the global South. This book stands out because of the meticulous documentation of expert teacher practices, which is one of the central aims and arguments presented. Educational researchers, ELT practitioners, teachers, teacher educators and policymakers committed to developing teacher expertise can benefit from the insights presented in the book. Promoting the understanding of expert teacher practices contributes to achieving the overarching aim of ensuring and improving equitable quality education worldwide also outlined in goal 4 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG), 'Quality Education'.

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