
Book Review

Book review: *Teacher Expertise in the Global South: Theory, research and evidence*, by Jason Anderson

Mirjam Hitzelberger^{1,*} 

¹ University of Education Weingarten, Weingarten, Germany

* Correspondence: mirjam.hitzelberger@ph-weingarten.de

Publication date: 21 December 2023

How to cite

Hitzelberger, Mirjam (2023) Book review: *Teacher Expertise in the Global South: Theory, research and evidence*, by Jason Anderson. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 15 (2), 115–117. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/IJDEGL.15.2.04>.

Peer review

This article has been through editorial review.

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Open access

International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

Book review: *Teacher Expertise in the Global South: Theory, research and evidence*, by Jason Anderson

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, 288 pp.; ISBNs: 9781009284851 (hbk); 9781009284837 (ebk)

Jason Anderson's 2023 book *Teacher Expertise in the Global South: Theory, research and evidence* sets out to shed light on a particular and – according to the author – hitherto under-researched subject, suggested by its very title: teacher expertise in the Global South. With this focus, the book aims to contribute to a long-standing debate on quality education, especially in the low(er) income countries of the Global South (see UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), 2014; World Education Forum, 2015). As Anderson rightly notes, improving the quality of education in countries of the Global South has been the goal of a great deal of Western development initiatives, and the need for qualified teachers is often emphasised, for example, in the United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goals. However, while many of these initiatives set out with good intentions, they often also – according to Anderson – imply a focus on Western concepts of quality, thereby overlooking good local practices and not considering the situated expertise of teachers in the respective countries. Against

this backdrop, Anderson aims to contribute to the debate by highlighting the already existing good pedagogical practices of teachers in the Global South and making them visible in the debate on teacher expertise. Moreover, the author points out that much of the research on quality and teacher expertise stems from, and focuses only on, countries in the Global North, and on the USA more particularly – leaving us with a conceptualisation of teacher expertise that ‘essentially neglects half the world’ (44). From a research-oriented as well as from a more practical point of view, the book has certainly identified a gap, and I therefore welcome Anderson’s contribution and his attempt to gain further insight into, and acknowledge the expertise of, actors in countries of the Global South.

The 288-page study consists of 11 chapters, offering a comprehensive literature review on the concept of teacher expertise, reflections on key concepts and methodological challenges of researching teacher expertise and a presentation and discussion of empirical findings based on the author’s PhD thesis (see Anderson, 2021).

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the topic and context of Anderson’s study. After an ample discussion of the concept of teacher expertise, as well as the related concepts of experience and effectiveness, and their respective pitfalls (Chapter 2), Anderson argues that teacher expertise needs to be understood as a set of community-referenced ‘context-specific competencies’ that are in their practice ‘valued within an educational community as a source of appropriate practice for others to learn from’ (29). Chapter 3 reviews the literature on teacher expertise, building on a prototype model of expertise developed by Sternberg and Horvath (1995) and pointing out the criteria used to assess teacher expertise throughout the existing literature. Chapter 4 takes a closer look at the context and challenges of teaching in the Global South, and how effective teaching can take place in these circumstances. Chapter 5 provides a reflection on the methodological challenges of researching teacher expertise and introduces the participatory design of Anderson’s study. Two aspects stand out here: on the one hand, the participants were actively involved in key decisions such as the exact focus of the study; on the other, they produced their own publication, which presents their experiences as teachers from their own perspective. This allowed them to make their voices heard, which sets the project apart from many of the studies that Anderson discusses in his literature review.

The following chapters outline the empirical findings of Anderson’s multi-case study involving eight Indian expert teachers of English in secondary public schools, starting with a detailed case description of one of the participating teachers from his study (Chapter 6). This is followed by a comparison of the cases in terms of their beliefs about teaching and learning, classroom practices and knowledge (Chapter 7) in order to characterise what Anderson calls the *quintain*, which refers to the larger phenomenon lying behind the individual cases – in this study, a general characterisation of expert Indian secondary teachers of English. While Chapter 7 focuses on commonalities, Chapter 8 compares the cases of the participating teachers with regard to differences in two areas of their pedagogic practices, that is, their conception of the subject of English and the degree of control the teachers exert.

In Chapter 9, Anderson discusses his findings against the backdrop of the literature on teacher expertise presented in his literature review in Chapter 3, before he translates his findings into an updated framework of teacher expertise (Chapter 10) that extends Sternberg and Horvath’s (1995) Western prototype model towards a more global model, also considering Southern teacher expertise. The book concludes with an excursion into wider theoretical thoughts on the need for Southern pedagogic theory (Chapter 11) and concluding reflections (Chapter 12).

As noted above, Anderson’s study certainly constitutes a contribution towards a more comprehensive and global understanding of teacher expertise. The participatory design of the study and the extensive involvement of the participating teachers in Anderson’s case studies in India reflect the claim to provide a broader view on teacher expertise that goes beyond models developed in, and focusing on, the Global North. The qualitative, comparative approach of the study offers deep insights into the beliefs and practices of the participating teachers – offering valuable perspectives for both researchers and practitioners (for example, teacher educators or educational policymakers), especially those working in the Global South. Although the book does not directly address issues in global education, it contains some interesting perspectives for researchers and educators in this field. The book provides a good example of how voices from the Global South can be actively engaged and how we can learn from the expertise of actors in these countries – a claim that is often made in the field of global education (see Andreotti, 2006, 2016). Furthermore, it offers inspiration for the field of not only teacher education for global education with regard to dealing with complex issues and challenges, but also socio-emotional and inclusive education – all aspects that play an important role in global education.

Two aspects could have benefited the discussion of the book from my point of view: as Anderson's own working definition of teacher expertise draws on the concept of teacher competencies, it would have been interesting to contextualise the study in the wider discourse of teacher competencies and quality education (see Kunter et al., 2013). Moreover, Anderson characterises expertise as a community-referenced construct. While the empirical chapters thoughtfully illustrate the teachers' professional practices, beliefs and orientations in dealing with challenges, as well as in their more general practice, the link to a community-based understanding of expertise could have been further elaborated, thereby sharpening Anderson's somewhat vague definition of teacher expertise.

Overall, the book provides interesting insights into a participatory qualitative study design, as well as an important contribution to the discourse on quality education that acknowledges theory and practice of the 'South' in a discourse that is often dominated by Western conceptualisations of quality and effectiveness.

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