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1 Introduction

I was led by my colleague across a dusty school playing field under the baking mid-morning sun in a poor suburb of Asmara. At first, it seemed that the school was deserted, as almost all schools in Eritrea are on Sunday mornings. But as we approached the classrooms, we began to hear voices inside. We approached one classroom quietly and peered in. Two students were standing in front of fifty or so others, the dismantled parts of an old broken computer on the desk before them. They were explaining to their classmates about the various parts of the computer and how they worked, while the latter quietly took notes and sometimes asked questions. Our arrival hardly disturbed them. These students were used to visiting *tsadas*.[1] We sat at the back and watched a whole lesson taught by these two 'tutors'. After the presentation came groupwork, in which the students discussed and compared notes on exam-type questions that one of the tutors had written on the board. Then the tutors paused the groupwork and began questioning elected group members, often probing them for further information and testing their understanding. Occasional mistakes were corrected by classmates or tutors in a spirit of discovery rather than criticism. The lesson concluded with the tutors inviting any further questions from peers. This was one of three classes of over 150 students in total, all of whom voluntarily came to school on Saturdays and Sundays, and had learnt to teach each other under the guidance of their teacher, Matiewas Ghebrechristos, who we subsequently found sitting quietly at the back of one of the other classrooms. His weekend 'science club', now in its fourth year, included lessons in almost every subject on the curriculum and many that were not (e.g., 'green club' and 'drama club'). Matiewas is well known – during my

[1] *Tsada*: lit. 'white' in Tigrinya; used to refer to (white) foreigners.

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two years in Eritrea as a volunteer teacher trainer, I was one of many who was taken on the pilgrimage to his school. To some extent, he was the *tsada*'s model teacher – evidence that a learner-centred pedagogy could work in Eritrea, at least in extracurricular education. Yet there were many other effective teachers across this financially poor country – not all were learner-centred in their approach, and very few known about. These teachers taught me two valuable lessons during my time there: that effective teachers are not exclusive to the global North, and that they are not all alike…

1.1 WHY THIS BOOK?

It is a self-evident truth that teacher quality varies in any educational system. There are good teachers and bad teachers everywhere. It is also self-evident that documenting and sharing knowledge about the practices of good teachers – the key focus of teacher expertise studies – is of use, in multiple ways, to educational systems around the world. This is particularly true of low-income countries in the global South (Nordstrum, 2015; Pryor et al., 2012; Westbrook et al., 2013), where improvements in quality in education are often urgently stressed by Western bodies as priorities in the battle to reduce poverty and support both social and economic development (e.g., UNESCO, 2014). Despite this, and despite the huge sums of development aid invested into quality-related interventions every year, it is a surprising reality that 'there is remarkably little good evidence on the effectiveness of different pedagogical practices in developing countries' (Muralidharan, 2017, p. 377). As Pryor et al. note:

> The knowledge base of successful teaching in low income contexts is not sufficiently developed. Much research has concentrated on the deficiencies of teaching in low income countries and we therefore have accounts of poor practice and pupil failure. What we do not have are detailed descriptions of teachers' good practice in contexts that are challenging. There is a need for research to seek out examples, to theorise them and to make them available as a resource for teacher education and policymaking. (2012, p. 498)

In this book, I offer evidence to support two claims: that there are many capable teachers working in the global South and that we can learn a great deal from them. Neither claim should be surprising, but the fact is that attempts to improve the quality of education in the global South have systematically overlooked these teachers for decades, if not centuries, due to

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biases prevalent in both assumptions and prejudices concerning the global South and in preconditioned beliefs concerning what good teaching is, and what it looks like in the classroom. Matiewas Ghebrechristos is an extremely hard-working and effective teacher who stands out (to me) due to his dedication to his science club and also possibly because he teaches in ways that reflect prevalent Northern beliefs concerning what good teaching is (I chose his example above to illustrate a point to those who share these beliefs). Other examples of 'outstanding' teachers working in the global South as identified by Northern organisations include three of the seven winners of the Global Teacher Prize to date (Hanan Al Hroub of Palestine, Peter Tabichi of Kenya and Ranjitsinh Disale of India).[2] As impressive as these teachers are, this book is not really about them. It is more about the many teachers who have reached a level of expertise such that we can learn about appropriate good (not 'best') practice from them, help others (if appropriate) to emulate them, and identify achievable, sustainable thresholds of expertise for the majority of teachers in an educational system such that achieving them would improve the quality of learning for large numbers of learners (Hattie, 2015).

As a teacher educator who has spent much of his career working in low-income countries (discussed further below), I have learnt that whenever these initiatives originate in local practice, they are more likely to be successful than if they are 'imported' from other contexts – the latter often resulting in what Holliday calls 'tissue rejection' (1994, p. 134) for numerous reasons, including *feasibility* (e.g., logistically), *appropriacy* (e.g., culturally) and *sustainability* (e.g., cost-wise).[3] There is an extensive body of literature stretching back over 100 years supporting Holliday's claim that it is neither possible nor desirable to transplant aspects of pedagogy in such ways (see, e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Sadler, 1900; Tabulawa, 1998; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012). Yet, when good practice originates in the context in question, such innovations are more likely to succeed for the same reasons in reverse (Sternberg, 2007). As Verspoor (2005, p. 38) observes, 'would it not be preferable to design innovations … that do not deviate too far from existing practice, that can be adapted and applied by a large number of teachers without too much difficulty…?' I would go further and argue that

[2] www.globalteacherprize.org

[3] These three factors, feasibility, appropriacy and sustainability, are returned to regularly in this book as key basal requirements for any (innovative) practice to be potentially successful.

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it is preferable to source such innovation in the existing practice of local practitioners – and for this, we need to identify expert teachers and document their practices.

This book examines key questions that enable us to do just this: questions concerning the nature of expertise as an appropriate measure of quality in the classroom, questions investigating what we already seem to know about both teacher expertise and effective teaching in low-income countries, and methodological questions underpinning any attempt to research teacher expertise in the global South. It presents the findings of an example study conducted in India that offers a feasible, replicable and ethically appropriate means to document such practices, thereby not only answering Pryor et al.'s (2012) call for studies of good practice in contexts that are challenging but also providing a means for such studies to become more widespread. While the study in question involves only one subject (English) at one level (secondary) and in one national context (India) (three limitations to the scope of my own research that must be acknowledged) the findings are presented with a focus on general, rather than subject-specific, expertise and are systematically cross-referenced with evidence from prior research. Based on this combination of both primary and secondary evidence, a differentiated framework for understanding teacher expertise is proposed: one that is inclusive of all teachers in all contexts, not just the global North or South. The book also offers a wider framework for research and teacher development that enables teaching communities around the world to build their own feasible, appropriate and sustainable evidence base of context-specific teacher expertise.

1.1.1 Defining 'Global South'

There are two complex and contested terms used in the title of this book, both of which require clarification. Chapter 2 offers extensive discussion of 'teacher expertise' as a construct and justification for my choice of it as a measure of quality. The other key term 'global South' is discussed here.

The terms 'global South' and 'Southern' are primarily used in this book to refer to national educational contexts that, using World Bank data (2019a), fall into either low-income or lower-middle-income categories. This choice derives from the focus of this book on understanding teacher expertise in the most challenging educational contexts worldwide; contexts where attempts to support and scaffold educational change and 'improvement' are most frequently directed in international development initiatives. It is well established that the primary influences on the quality and challenges

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of educational provision and uptake around the world are, at root, financial (Clemens, 2004; Huisman & Smits, 2009; Lee & Barro, 2001). This includes both direct investment into the education system itself[4] and income levels and financial precarity across the population attempting to access and benefit from education. Such issues of income and investment have real social and practical implications, not only in schools (e.g., class size, infrastructure, availability of resources) and teacher education but also for a child's school readiness, nutrition levels, access to education and family support during schooling (see Section 4.1). Importantly, it is these influences and the resulting conditions and challenges that constitute the key shared characteristics of educational contexts across the global South, much more so than, say, a post-colonial predicament.[5] With only occasional exceptions, prior research reviewed in this book separates countries according to this distinction. The original data presented in this book comes from India, a country classified in the bottom half of lower-middle-income countries when data was collected (World Bank, 2019a). It shares numerous financially influenced challenges with other low- and lower-middle-income countries (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2019; Wiseman & Kumar, 2021; see Section 4.1), and therefore is, in many ways, representative of these financially poor Southern states. At times, particularly in Chapter 4, I will also use the term 'developing countries' to refer to these same national contexts, particularly when reporting on studies that use this term.

In making this definitional choice, I do not wish to underplay the complex differences in educational experience within a given state (Southern or Northern), nor to argue that all Southern contexts experience the same challenges. As others have argued (e.g., Grech, 2015), in some senses there are many global Souths, not one. Further, I am very much aware that other authors, particularly in the social sciences, understand and use the term 'global South' very differently, as 'more than a metaphor for underdevelopment' (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 13), seeking to use it to refer to disadvantaged or marginalised social groups around the world, including in countries in the global North (e.g., Grech, 2015; Pennycook & Makoni, 2020; Santos, 2016). On occasions when I reference these alternative understandings of the South, this will be made clear in the text below, including in Chapter 11, where I discuss Southern Theory.

[4] For example, India's per child yearly expenditure is just 2% of OECD averages (see Section 4.1).

[5] Not all Southern countries are post-colonial, and many Northern ones are.

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1.1.2 My Background as Author

The introductory vignette for this chapter introduces two important themes in this book. The first is the discourse on teaching quality that constitutes its primary focus – what is meant by 'quality', what it may look like in the global South and why it is a key priority in development in education today (e.g., UN Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality education). The second is the background, bias and positioning of the observer or writer – whose vision of quality is being presented, where this vision comes from and the multiple dangers associated with ethnocentrism. As such, I feel a compelling need to introduce myself to the reader before progressing further.

Having started my career as an English language teacher in the 1990s, I was privileged by my English-native-speaker background to benefit from the opportunity to travel to and teach in a number of countries around the world; first in Europe (Ukraine, UK, Italy, Turkey), where my experience was mainly in the private English language teaching (ELT) sector, and then as a volunteer teacher educator in Africa (Eritrea, Rwanda, Kenya), where, despite not having the required training and only limited relevant experience, I was expected to be(come) an 'expert' in basic (K12) education, and was thrown into primary and secondary classrooms that could hardly have been more different to those I had taught in myself. As the vignette above reveals, I had arrived in Eritrea with biases; beliefs and values that I could not see beyond, particularly concerning learner-centred education and, in ELT, communicative language teaching (CLT). Four years of living and working in these countries provided opportunities for me not only to understand how conceptions of quality in education are inextricably linked to sociocultural values (Alexander, 2000; Bruner, 1996; Sternberg, 2007) but also to witness and then learn about alternative visions of teaching quality beyond those I had been enculturated into, thanks to the expertise of numerous teachers I had the privilege to work with (see Anderson, 2015b). This learning has since continued over many years working as an educational consultant, researcher and materials designer in numerous countries worldwide, the majority in the global South. This experience has provided me with well-contextualised[6] opportunities to look at issues of quality and culture from different perspectives, and to become reflexive concerning my own biases as a teacher educator (see Edge, 2012). Today I am very much aware of the origins and sociopolitical connotations of approaches in education typically referred to as 'progressive' or 'learner-centred', and

[6] I learnt the national language in several of these countries.

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their dangers as what Schweisfurth calls 'travelling policies' (2013b; also see Tabulawa, 2003). Yet I retain critical interests in them that the reader should be aware of (see e.g., Anderson, 2019a; Anderson & Kamaluddin, 2015); these interests are inextricably linked to a concern with wider issues of quality in the classroom – what constitutes 'good teaching' – that underpins my work as a teacher educator and my motivation for writing this book.

1.2 WHAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT TEACHER EXPERTISE

Over 100 empirical studies have been conducted investigating aspects of the cognition and practices of teachers identified as experts since the 1980s, when scholars such as Gaea Leinhardt (e.g., 1983) and David Berliner (e.g., 1986) began their work in this area. While research on experts in many other fields of social practice was well established at the time and relatively uncontroversial, this was not the case concerning 'expert teachers' (Berliner, 2004), and some resistance to this phrase still exists to this day, due to the association between the notion of expertise and that of exclusivity (something teachers frequently distrust; see Goodwyn, 2017), rather than seeing the expert as a manifestation of professional competence, as it is typically perceived in other fields (e.g., legal practice, healthcare and engineering; Goodwyn, 2017).

Since this early research, methodological frameworks have emerged for identifying and studying expert teachers. Generally speaking, for inclusion in an expertise study, a teacher typically needs to have a professional qualification and sufficient experience for expertise to develop (at least five years) as baseline prerequisites (Palmer et al., 2005). In addition to these, researchers seek to identify teachers who seem to stand out in some way as leading practitioners within a given community. The most common means for finding such teachers has tended to be nomination by school inspectors, teacher educators and school headteachers, although a wide range of other criteria have also been used, often in combination, to select teachers for expertise studies. These include the possession of advanced teaching qualifications (e.g., National Board Certification in the USA[7]) or teaching awards, evidence of additional roles as teacher educators and mentors for colleagues, and evidence of higher student achievement than comparable peers (see Palmer et al., 2005); these are reviewed in detail in Section 5.5.

[7] www.nbpts.org

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Once identified, expert teacher studies have investigated aspects of their cognition, their beliefs, their pedagogic practices, their professionalism and their personalities, sometimes in combination, and with both specific and generic focuses on different aspects of expertise (Tsui, 2009). These studies have involved a wide range of approaches, including case study (Sorensen, 2014), ethnography (Traianou, 2006), lesson observations (Smith & Strahan, 2004), phenomenology (Patterson, 2014), laboratory studies (Crawford et al., 2005), the use of specific research tools, such as eye-tracking cameras (Wolff et al., 2016) and stimulated recall interviews (Leinhardt et al., 1984). Of particular interest in these studies has been the comparison of expert teachers with either novice teachers or so-called 'experienced non-experts' (e.g., Hattie, 2003; Tsui, 2003) to identify potentially important differences, either in their performance or development.

However, there is a strong bias in the contexts of these studies. The majority have been conducted in the USA, and the remainder tend to originate in Western Europe, Australasia and, more recently, East Asia, including several studies conducted in the more affluent provinces of eastern China (Anderson, 2021). As a result, we know almost nothing about expert teachers working in the more challenging contexts typical of the global South.[8] This has meant that the literature on teacher expertise and any reviews of it (see, e.g., Sternberg & Horvath, 1995; Stigler & Miller, 2018) describe teacher expertise with very little awareness of the typical contexts of many teachers around the world today, often assuming that teacher expertise is primarily a product of effective organisational contexts or wider teacher communities, and hypothesising as a result that it is unable to develop or exist in more challenging contexts. For example, Stigler and Miller (2018), in their discussion of this issue, argue that 'an expert teacher in a dysfunctional school system' might be either an 'oxymoron' or 'a waste of human resources' (p. 434).

In view of these opinions, there is an urgent need not only to identify and document the practices of expert teachers working in the global South (simply to prove to some sceptics that they exist), but also to understand how teacher expertise may develop outside of formalised support networks. However, perhaps more importantly, teacher expertise studies in Southern classrooms are needed simply because they are capable of showing other educators working in comparable contexts potential ways to be effective, even when the conditions and constraints of practice are operating against them. In this sense, then, we have no models of appropriate effective practice for

[8] Toraskar's study (2015) is an exception (see Section 3.9.1).

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teachers working in the most difficult contexts to learn from today, something that could be seen to be a striking neglect of the international educational research community (Alexander, 2015; Muralidharan, 2017; Pryor et al., 2012).

Research that sheds detailed light on the pedagogic practices of expert teachers working in the global South is also of particular use because of the relative lack of focus on aspects of pedagogy in international research into education and development. Alexander (2015) has even called this neglect of pedagogy the ‘missing ingredient’ (p. 254) in comparative education research. In this regard, studies of Southern teacher expertise enable us to shed light into what many econometric and statistical researchers of education in developing countries characterise as the ‘black box’ of the classroom (e.g., Aslam & Rawal, 2015; World Bank, 2016). Indeed, Alexander (2015) notes that ‘the striking feature’ of the global monitoring reports (GMRs), for example, ‘is that they do not so much engage with pedagogy as circle around it’, leaving it ‘securely locked in its black box’ (p. 253).

Finally, while there are numerous studies identifying similarities among cohorts of expert teachers (e.g., Gross, 2014; Li & Zou, 2017; Marten, 2015), an area that has been comparatively neglected in expertise research is systematic comparison of the *differences* between expert teachers to understand exactly how experts do differ, along what parameters and why. The assumption has tended to be that it is the similarities that are most important, yet these can only be understood relative to the differences.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The original research data presented in this book derives from my UK ESRC-sponsored[9] PhD study, conducted between 2018 and 2021 (see Anderson, 2021), investigating teacher expertise within the field of English language teaching in Indian state-sponsored secondary education. Since defending the thesis, I have conducted further literature research (particularly for Chapters 3 and 4), performed additional analysis of the data collected (Chapters 7 and 8) and developed a number of theoretical frameworks that are here presented for the first time, particularly in Chapters 10 and 11. While the PhD thesis presented three detailed individual case descriptions and included more extensive subject-specific discussion, this book looks primarily at the

[9] Economic and Social Research Council grant references ES/P000771/1 and ES/T502054/1.

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wider (non-subject-specific features) of teacher expertise and includes only one individual case description (Chapter 6) to allow more space for discussion of wider literatures of relevance as well as more extensive discussion of, and theorisation from, the findings. Readers interested in reading other such case descriptions may access these directly in the thesis itself, available online (Anderson, 2021).

This introductory chapter concludes in Section 1.4 with discussion of paradigmatic concerns, particularly my rejection of the paradigm divide between positivism and constructivism and my interest in bringing together and critiquing all possible sources of evidence within a critical realist framework. This is justified through the need for high-quality qualitative research to be more widely recognised alongside large-scale quantitative research (e.g., econometric studies, meta-analyses and regression analyses) in influencing both future research agendas and evidence-based decision making in international development fora and local national contexts.

Chapter 2 discusses the construct of teacher expertise, initially considering the challenge of defining expertise and reviewing a large number of definitions of expertise in the research and theoretical literature. It identifies four types of conceptualisation, two of which are norm-referenced and two criterion-referenced, and argues that while there is a 'fuzzy core' at the centre of both everyday understandings and academic definitions of the term 'expertise', in many cases the term is often used ambiguously, and as a proxy for other measures of quality, such as effectiveness or experience. I argue that teacher expertise is a more appropriate measure of practitioner quality than either teacher effectiveness or experience, neither of which is sufficient to capture the breadth and complexity of the impact and influence of highly valued educators within their professional context. The chapter concludes by offering a working definition of teacher expertise that recognises it as both competence-based and community-referenced (i.e., situated), while allowing sufficient flexibility for local interpretations around its core features.

Chapter 3 introduces Sternberg and Horvath's (1995) expert teacher prototype – a key construct in this book – as a potentially appropriate means to bring together the findings of expertise research thus far, one that avoids a 'best practice' approach (rejected in this book due to its implicit connotation of universal relevance). After outlining the systematic, replicable approach to the extensive and original literature review conducted for this study, and identifying the Northern-centric bias in this literature, Chapter 3 presents an updated overview of the prototype itself, summarising the most frequently reported findings from teacher expertise studies concerning the knowledge

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