English language teacher expertise in India: A participatory case study

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Personal background and project

- I'm a teacher educator (English language teaching mainly), 25 years in education, 20 as teacher educator, much in Global South (esp. sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia), esp. for UNICEF, British Council, MOEs

- PhD as part of 1+3 ESRC funded project at Warwick (grant ES/P000771/1), nearing completion (2017-2021)

- Data collection was completed before Covid 19 epidemic

- Thesis title (Anderson, 2021): "Eight expert Indian teachers of English: A participatory, comparative case study of teacher expertise in the Global South" http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/159940/

Justification for study

- Clear need for research into **good/effective** pedagogy in GS (e.g., Alexander, 2015; Muralidharan, 2017; Pryor et al., 2012)

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. (Pryor et al., 2012, p. 498)

Justification for study

- Clear need for research into **effective** pedagogy in GS (e.g., Alexander, 2015; Muralidharan, 2017; Pryor et al., 2012)

- Extensive evidence that challenges of Global South (GS) necessitate different pedagogic practices to Global North (e.g., Holliday, 1994; Westbrook et al., 2013)

- Almost no prior research on teacher expertise in GS (Toraskar, 2015, is only exception)

- Potentially useful for teacher education, teacher evaluation, curriculum development, future research (theory generation)

Why "expertise"?

Expertise is the most appropriate measure of pedagogical "quality":

- 'effectiveness': effect on students' exam scores (**too narrow a focus**; Brophy & Good, 1986; Muijs et al., 2005; UNESCO, 2017)

- 'experience': no clear relationship to quality (**too broad a focus**; Day et al., 2006; Hattie, 2003)

- 'expertise': if theorised appropriately (to include all that we value in teachers), can be a wider measure than effectiveness, incorporating it, and also building on experience

Not necessarily 'quality'
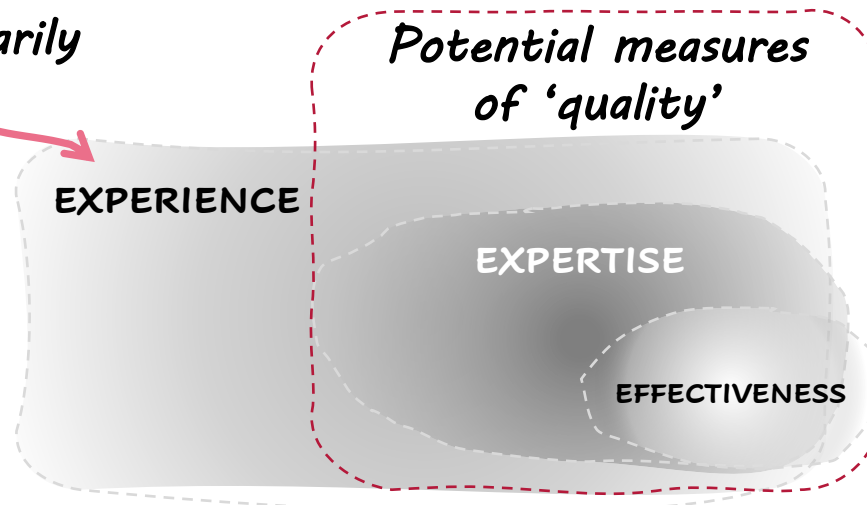
Potential measures of 'quality'

EXPERIENCE

EXPERTISE

EFFECTIVENESS

Teacher expertise research

- Started in the 1980s in the USA: Gaea Leinhardt and David Berliner were early researchers (see Berliner, 2004)
- Simple research design:

Find expert teachers

⬇

Study aspects of their cognition, teaching, development or professionalism

⬇

Share findings for teacher education and curriculum development

⬇

Recommendations based on expertise studies are feasible, culturally appropriate and sustainable

Teacher expertise research

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But what do you mean by 'expert teachers'?

How do you find expert teachers?

Prerequisite criteria

1. Sufficient basic qualification (e.g. BEd. in India)
2. Enough time for expertise to develop (over 5 years)

Example indicators of expertise

1. Teacher educator status (alongside permanent job)
2. High student achievement (e.g. exam scores)
3. Receipt of teaching award(s)
4. Commitment to own professional development
5. Recommendation by others (e.g. inspectors, head teachers, etc.)

See Palmer et al. (2005)

The missing link in teacher expertise research

- There is a strong bias towards higher-income contexts.

- 59% of all teacher expertise studies conducted in USA; 14% in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, remainder in W. Europe.

- Only 1 prior study conducted in India (Toraskar, 2015).

- We do not have a clear vision of Indian teacher expertise.

- No culturally appropriate model for trainee teachers to follow!

How I defined expertise

- Need to ensure it's context-sensitive:

"Teacher expertise is an enacted amalgam of learnt, context-specific competencies (i.e., embodied knowledge, skills and awareness) that is valued within an educational community as a source of appropriate practice for others to learn from."

(Anderson, 2021, p. 44)
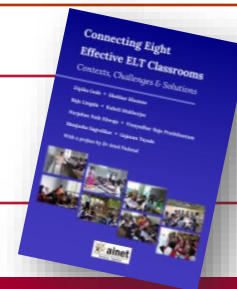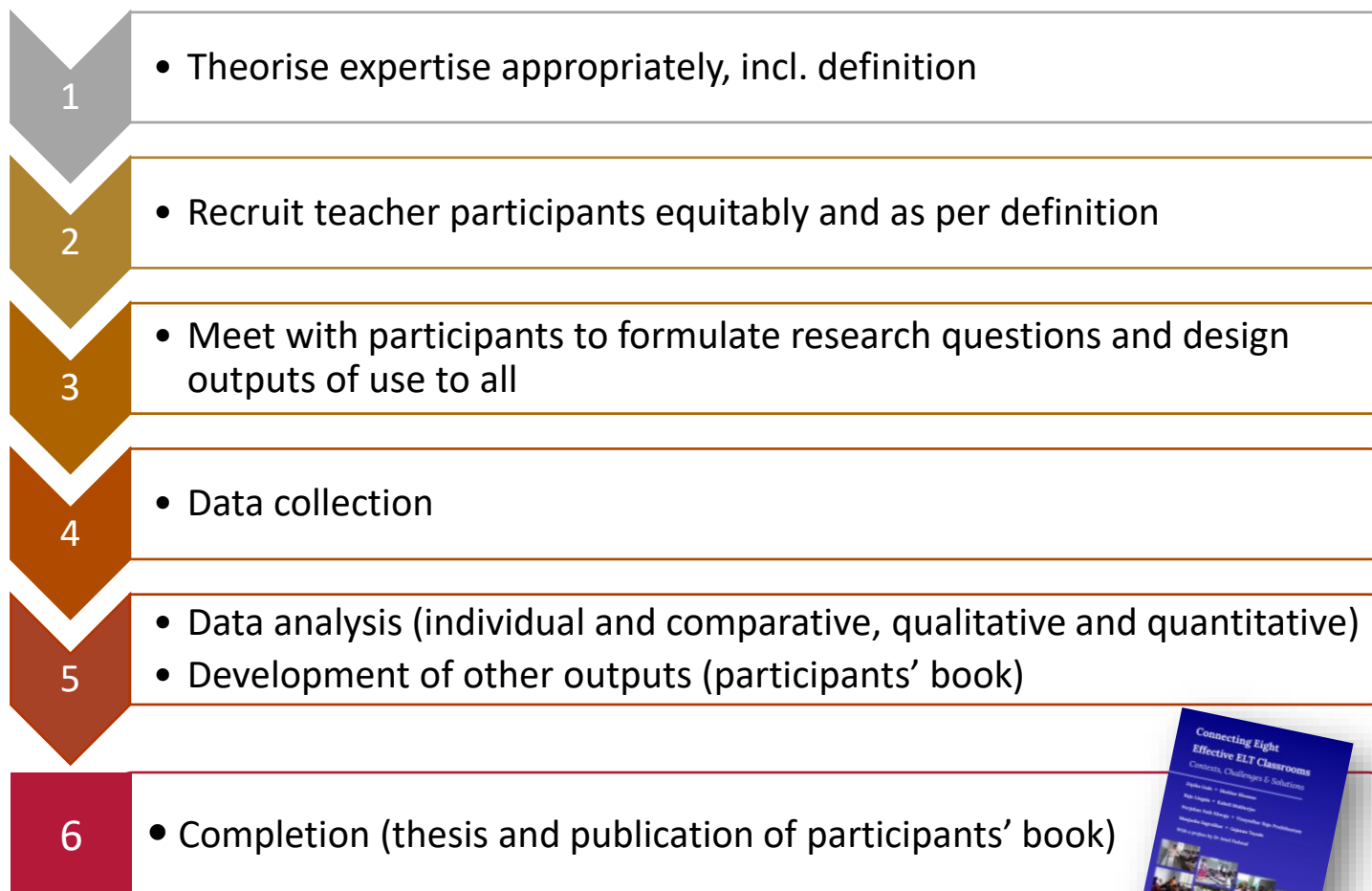
How to make 'case study' non-exploitative?

- Most 'participatory' research in education is teacher-led and interventive – not possible

- The participatory approach selected was original, drawing on community development literature where degrees/"ladders" of participation are recognised (e.g., Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2008; Pretty, 1995)

- Sources converge on 2 criteria: both sides must benefit; meaningful interaction at design stage:

> The most important distinctions centre on how and by whom the research question is formulated and by and for whom research findings are used. (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p. 1668)

- I decided to include a 1-day face-to-face planning meeting with participants (video meetings also)

Design

Participatory comparative case study design with several stages:

1 • Theorise expertise appropriately, incl. definition

2 • Recruit teacher participants equitably and as per definition

3 • Meet with participants to formulate research questions and design outputs of use to all

4 • Data collection

5 • Data analysis (individual and comparative, qualitative and quantitative)
• Development of other outputs (participants' book)

6 • Completion (thesis and publication of participants' book)

The participants

- 8 participant teachers and 3 state contexts (Maharashtra, Telangana, West Bengal)

- They volunteered to participate, recruited via AINET teacher association

- Each met at least 5 indicators of expertise (e.g., teacher educator, high learner achievement, teaching award, curriculum development adviser, scholarship winner)

- Government (or govt-aided) secondary school contexts

- Learners 73% disadvantaged

- The study was participatory: The teachers all contributed to the design and products

- After participant validation they chose not to be anonymous

Deepika Gode

Gajanan Tayade

Nurjahan Naik

Raju Lingala

Kuheli Mukherjee

Manjusha Sagrolikar

Shekhar Khomne

Vinaydhar Raju

1-day planning meeting (face-to-face)

Agenda agreed upon in prior Zoom meeting:

1. Exploration of roles of participants and researcher;
2. The focus of the PhD study;
3. A co-authored publication produced by the participants;
4. Participant group reflection without the researcher;
5. Timetabling of case study visits and practical issues.

Also useful for team-building; had time to socialize together. Made possible thanks to ESRC funding.

Research questions

1. What are the features of the pedagogic and professional practice, related cognition and beliefs of eight expert teachers working in Indian state-sponsored secondary education?

2. What commonalities and differences can be identified when comparing these features?

3. To what extent are the commonalities identified consistent with those of expert teachers in other researched contexts?

Data collected over 10 months

Name[1]	Days spent at school	Participant lessons observed	Participant teacher interviews	Interviews of other stakeholders	Other teacher observations
1. Raju (pilot)	13	21	7	7	3
2. Vinay	21	32	10	6	5
3. Shekhar	20	27	10	4	9
4. Gajanan	21	38	10	6	7
5. Dipika	25	34	9	7	4
6. Nurjahan	21	32	7	5	4
7. Manjusha	20	30	7	4	4
8. Kuheli	24	28	7	5	4
Total	**165**	**242**	**67**	**44**	**40**

1. Pseudonyms not used (participants chose to be identified after participant validation)

Key findings – analysis of commonalities

- **Cognition:** Well developed integrated knowledge base, incl. PCK esp. of learners; high levels of English language proficiency; extensive reflection.

- **Beliefs (in):** Building learner self-confidence; engaging learners; ensuring understanding of lesson content; constructivism; balancing learning needs with exam preparation; teaching multilingually.

- **Interpersonal:** Positive relationships of trust and respect; creating safe, inclusive, supportive learning environments; high learner engagement → low levels of off-task behaviour.

- **Pedagogy:** Balanced between learner-independent and teacher-led activities; whole-class interactive teaching; regular collaborative learning and individual seatwork; active monitoring; differentiated support; language-inclusive, translingual practices.

- **Personal attributes:** Passion for profession; enjoyment of work; care for learners; self-confident; autonomous; resilient

- **Professionalism**…

Professionalism of expert Indian teachers

- Dedication and hard work
- Continuously striving to improve (lifelong learning)
- Interest in CPD and higher qualifications
- Collaborate frequently and widely with colleagues (e.g. through teacher associations)
- Help others, as mentor, teacher educator, local CoP leader
- Challenge oneself (e.g. experimenting, trying out new ideas)
- Reflect critically on one's own practice
- Seek feedback from others
- Underpinned by 'care' for their learners as primary evaluators

cf. Fullan's "collaborative professionalism" (2016)

Key findings – analysis of difference (within group)

Biggest areas of difference: teaching and languaging practices:

- Participants' teaching practices varied clinally with regard to two key "explanatory" factors: **Conception of Subject** (what "English" is) and **Degree of Control** (of behaviour, schemes of work, and discourse) comparable to Bernstein's *classification* and *framing* respectively (e.g., 2000).

- Participants' use of learners' other languages in English classroom (L1) varied from 11% to 85%, linked to Conception of Subject (but all were "L1 inclusive" for learners).

Comparison to prior studies of teacher expertise

- Strong support found from this study for many "robust" findings of prior empirical studies of expert teachers' practices/cognition

- Strong agreement with prior research into "effective teaching" in developing countries / Global South (e.g., Westbrook et al., 2013)

- Several important differences, including:

  - my participants' prioritisation of inclusion and confidence-building over setting high standards

  - their complex multilingual practices (Anderson, 2022a)

  - a stronger focus on learner understanding (LOTS) than higher-order thinking skills (HOTS)

  - their varied strategies for helping learners assimilate content from highly ambitious curricula

Participants' publication

- See Gode et al. (2021), available online:

- https://www.theainet.net/connecting_eight_effective_ELT_classrooms.pdf

- Participants decided on title, chapter structure (incl. advice for less experienced colleagues)

- Peer-reviewed each other's chapters

- Offers 'voice' to participants and opportunities for *emic triangulation* of my findings

Connecting Eight Effective ELT Classrooms

Contexts, Challenges & Solutions

Dipika Gode ● Shekhar Khomne

Raju Lingala ● Kuheli Mukherjee

Nurjahan Naik Khwaja ● Vinayadhar Raju Prathikantam

Manjusha Sagrolikar ● Gajanan Tayade

With a preface by Dr Amol Padwad

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8. Bringing the best out of our learners

Kuheli Mukherjee

1. My context and challenges

My Context

'Creeng–creeng–creeng!' the phone goes on ringing. I open my eyes and pick up the phone. A happy and childish voice says 'Ma'am I just submitted my assignment. Have you received it?' Oh, what time is it? A look at the bedside watch confirms it is just 6 a.m. in the morning and yes, that is how most of my days start during Covid induced lockdown... This was one of my 7th graders completing the task I had assigned on a social media group of my school students the evening before. Well, I have been teaching English as a second language (ESL) in a well-known government run Higher Secondary school in Kolkata for around three decades. My school, with a history of

development but the fact remains that even as researcher I find it difficult to record my reflections regularly and systematically due to time constraints. Still I do scribble thoughts or reflective notes in a diary on a regular basis.

2. My Teaching

My Beliefs

My own experience of learning English has played a vital role in developing my beliefs about learning a second or a foreign language. Studying in a vernacular medium school, my interest in English grew because of the attitude of my English teacher. She was always encouraging us to use English notwithstanding the mistakes we made. She would be recasting my sentences with an affectionate smile that was reassuring and confidence boosting. So from the first day as a teacher I felt I should try to make my class interesting to my learners and try to be someone whom learners are not afraid of. Secondly, I always believed that learning a language means being able to use that language in speaking as well as writing. So enabling my learners to use English in their practical life was my objective. Since childhood I was a voracious reader of literature in Bangla, my mother tongue, and English also. I would always keep a dictionary handy to understand difficult words while reading anything in English. I strongly believed in the effectiveness of such extensive reading on the language learning of my students. Later, my training in TESOL along with my long experience as a teacher and in-service teacher trainer helped me realize that these beliefs have played a significant role in making me the teacher I am.

Curriculum coverage and my planning

The mandatory pre-service teacher education course taught me how to plan lessons to facilitate language learning. However, while teaching in school I hardly have time for meticulous planning. Nevertheless, I have realized that if I did not have overall planning to cover the syllabus, it would be difficult to achieve curriculum objectives for my students. Since we have to follow a prescribed syllabus for each grade, at the beginning of the term I make a plan for how much of the syllabus I would cover and what learning outcomes I should be targeting. I do not believe in merely covering the syllabus, but in attaining expected learning outcomes of my learners. So it might happen that I do not complete teaching all the lessons in the prescribed text with equal emphasis. Rather, I would focus on developing skill-specific language

Other collaborative outputs (online & hybrid)

- AINET Conference Symposium: Effective teaching - Stories from experience (9 Jan 2022)

- British Council India English Connects Workshop: Turning experience into expertise: How can we continue developing as English language teachers? (online soon) (11 May 2022)

- AINET Stories of Effective Teaching Workshop Series:
  - Pairwork and groupwork (16 Apr 2022)
  - Project work (28 May 2022)
  - Working with texts (18 Jun 2022)
  - Balancing between languages (23 Jul 2022)
  - Working with TLMs (20 Aug 2022)

- POET Workshop series: Activities for increasing learner engagement with texts (19 Nov 2021)

Publications from the project

Anderson, J. (2020). The effective teacher of English: An exploratory qualitative study of Indian English teachers' beliefs. *ELTED Journal, 23*, 10-20.

Anderson, J. (2021). *Eight expert Indian teachers of English: A participatory comparative case study of teacher expertise in the Global South.* [Doctoral diss., University of Warwick]. WRAP. http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/159940/

Anderson, J. (2022a). The translanguaging practices of expert Indian teachers of English and their learners. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2045300

Anderson, J. (2022b). *Learning from Indian teacher expertise: A policy and practice report for educational organisations in India.* University of Warwick. http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.21551.61609

Gode et al. (2021). *Connecting eight effective ELT classrooms.* AINET: https://www.theainet.net/connecting_eight_effective_ELT_classrooms.pdf

Mahapatra, S. K. & Anderson, J. (2022). Languages for learning: a framework for implementing India's multilingual language-in-education policy. *Current Issues in Language Planning.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2022.2037292

Forthcoming

Anderson, J. (forthcoming a). *Teacher expertise in the Global South: Theory, research and evidence*. Cambridge University Press [Cambridge Education Research series].

Anderson, J. (forthcoming b). Can teacher case study research be participatory? Critical reflections on the approach adopted for an English language teacher expertise study in India (under review).
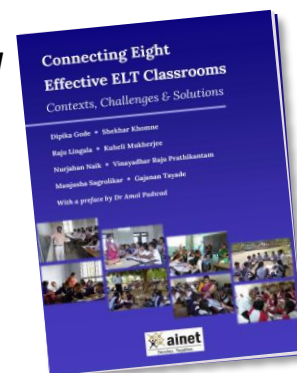
(Some) Implications

1. (Expertise) case studies can be (at least partially) participatory, equitable, and include outputs beyond researcher's agenda (Anderson, forthcoming b)

2. Similar studies in southern contexts could contribute to building context-sensitive "expert teacher prototype[s]" (Anderson, forthcoming a; Sternberg & Horvath, 1995)

3. Practical recommendations on appropriate, sustainable and effective practices may be directly relevant to teacher education, curriculum design, policy documents (in context in question)

4. Practices of interest could, if required, be researched further (e.g., experimental or action research studies)

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Slides are on my website: www.jasonanderson.org.uk/talks.htm

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