

Funds of Knowledge approach in practice: Minority Teacher's Experiences in Yorkshire/UK

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Abstract

As classrooms become increasingly diverse, early years' education faces the critical challenge of creating inclusive learning environments. This study explores a significant trend in educational practice: the implementation of the Funds of Knowledge (FoK) approach in multicultural settings. Focusing on early years' teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds in Yorkshire, England, the study investigates how educators understand and apply FoK in their classrooms, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

This qualitative research, involving semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with 10 early years' teachers, reveals innovative strategies for identifying and incorporating students' FoK. These include building strong relationships with students and parents, encouraging self-expression, and integrating cultural elements into the curriculum. The study also uncovers challenges educators face, such as navigating cultural stereotypes and overcoming communication barriers within curricular constraints.

Key findings demonstrate that FoK approaches enhance cultural understanding, increase learning engagement, promote unity, and foster collaborative learning. Using FoK approaches helped teachers gain a deeper understanding of their students' backgrounds, interests, and skills, enabling them to create an inclusive learning environment that values and leverages students' diverse FoK. However, teachers consistently grapple with ensuring fairness and equal opportunities for all students. This research contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on culturally responsive pedagogy in early years' education, with implications for teacher education programs and school policies supporting diverse student populations.

By examining this crucial educational trend, our study addresses pressing issues in multicultural early years settings and offers practical insights for educators and policymakers alike. It underscores the need for continued research into developing and evaluating targeted interventions that support teachers in implementing culturally responsive practices, ultimately aiming to improve outcomes for all students in our increasingly diverse educational landscape.

Keywords: Funds of knowledge, early childhood education, cultural diversity, Minority teachers.