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Revitalizing the Home Visit—How Schools Can Include Students with School Refusal in Teaching

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Abstract

Historically, home visits have played a significant role in the relationship between school and home, particularly in connection with school entry. They have been considered an indispensable tool for helping students adapt to school expectations, as well as a means of strengthening the relationship between teacher and student.

This article presents an analysis and discussion of the history of home visits in Denmark and contemporary research in the field, including critiques of current practices. Drawing on the concepts of *Funds of Knowledge and Funds of Identity* (FoK/I), the article outlines possibilities for revitalizing the home visit as a concrete pedagogical approach. The aim is to enhance schools understanding of each student's unique skills and background, as conveyed through the home context and the student's own narratives: face to face contact that cannot be replicated through digital interactions. Methodologically, the article is a conceptual and theoretical contribution supported by a single illustrative case vignette rather than a systematic empirical study.

Keywords: School-home collaboration, Funds of knowledge, Differentiated teaching, classroom, Student background

1. Introduction

Home visit, as part of a welfare pedagogical tradition, has for various reasons been neglected, resulting in changes to the relationship between schools and families. At times, home visits have been used inappropriately, primarily serving to inform the home about formal principles and expectations, rather than focusing on strengthening collaboration regarding the child's experience in the institution, based on their background and conditions.

This article takes as its point of departure the fact that an increasing number of students experience school refusal and actively resist attending school. We argue that there are strong reasons to revitalize the home visit as a pedagogical tool that acknowledges and enables schools to pedagogically and didactically incorporate the unique resources that students bring with them from home. Through home visits, teachers gain deeper insights into the student's home environment, family situation, personal competencies, and 'private' challenges, all of which are crucial to the student's well-being and educational trajectory. Home visits can serve as a key instrument for tailoring instruction and guiding teachers and educators in providing the right support, allowing schools to more effectively meet each student's specific needs.

In many countries, the COVID-19 pandemic led to extensive measures to reduce physical engagement including the closure of childcare institutions and schools. In the aftermath of the pandemic, increased attention has been given to the impact school closures have had on vulnerable student groups. Remote teaching and privately organized homeschooling have proven insufficient in preventing many children from disconnecting from the education system entirely following the reopening of schools (SBST, 2023). Especially migrant students, students with disabilities, children in foster care, and children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds have not resumed regular attendance. It is characteristic that school refusal during the pandemic primarily affected students who were already struggling with school attendance.

The article is therefore best understood as a theoretically driven, conceptual exploration of FoK/I, informed by existing research and one carefully selected illustrative case rather than by systematic data collection and analysis. The aim of this article is to theoretically develop the sociological concepts of Funds of Knowledge and Funds of Identity, and to explore their potential in addressing school refusal, a growing issue across Western countries (Kelley et al., 2023).

First, we examine the role of the home visit in Danish school history and present an observed case involving a vulnerable child refusing to attend school, illustrating how FoK/I provided insight and support to the student, parents, and teachers. We then present relevant research on home visits and discuss the reasons behind the school system's lack of interest in this practice.

Second, we explore the concepts of Funds of Knowledge and Funds of Identity, originally developed by the American cultural sociologist Luis Moll and others from the 1990s and onward, and explain how these methodologies can offer teachers new insights into student

competencies that would otherwise remain unrecognized in school contexts.

Finally, we consider FoK as both a method and a concrete approach to home visits, before discussing its relevance to students affected by school refusal.

Educational Psychological Counseling (PPR) and school administrations in Denmark have over the years implemented numerous measures to reintegrate school-refusing students. In some cases, special educational initiatives have proven successful (Johnsen, Lomholt, & Heyne, 2024). In others, students have returned on their own to the school system, but for many more, school refusal has become a long-term condition. As a socio-pedagogical and didactic tool, the home visit remains relatively overlooked in educational research (Park & Paulick, 2021). We therefore argue that the home visit should be revisited both by researchers and practitioners as it offers a basis for pedagogical-didactic support and retention of vulnerable students. We propose that this basis could be found in the FoK/I approach.

2. The Historical Background of Home Visits

In Denmark, the 1814 "Elementary Education Act" established that all children were required to attend school regularly from the age of seven until their teens. Despite the central role of Christianity in the curriculum, the law was utilitarian in nature: it aimed to ensure that all pupils would acquire specific subjects reading, writing, arithmetic, and history that would later benefit society. Children were schooled to become loyal to the nation and the monarchy, socially aware, and diligent. The teacher was typically the local priest or parish clerk, a respected figure assumed to be capable of educating children in accordance with prescribed guidelines and legislation. There was no special education or tailored support for children who could not "keep up." These children were left to the home, where it was expected that their upbringing and usefulness to society would be cultivated (Larsen, Nøhr, & Sonne, 2013).

A distinct Danish school tradition has thus, from the outset, relied on the tacit assumption that the home could serve as a "reserve school" for children weary of institutional education. Historically, the relationship between home and school has been close.

Over time, the Danish school system has changed, but the strong connection between school and home has persisted up to the present day. However, in the past decade, the collaboration between schools and families has diminished—both in terms of time and frequency. This decline has occurred parallel to a marked increase in the number of children and young people who are absent from school (Ministry of Children and Education, 2020).

One might expect that schools would be eager to strengthen their contact with families in order to collaborate with parents on improving students' school experiences. This has not yet happened to any significant extent. Often the resources and competencies students demonstrate at home are unknown to teachers and when such resources are known, teachers rarely consider how these might be integrated into school life to enhance students' identity and sense of value. Contact with the home tends to be formal and often mandatory. Therefore, much valuable knowledge about the home environment is lost knowledge that could ultimately help reduce the number of vulnerable children who resist schooling and make the school more affirming, inclusive, and enriching for all students.

In the next section, we move from this historical overview to a review of contemporary research on home visits, in order to situate the Danish development within broader international debates about school-home collaboration.

3. Research on Home Visits

In general, research shows that the purpose of professional home visits is to support vulnerable families by creating an environment that fosters children's development. This is supported by studies from English-speaking countries, where various models for home visits have been developed. Two main types dominate: one focuses on students' mental and emotional development, and the other on improving academic performance (Mayer, Corcoran, Kennedy, Leucht, & Bighelli, 2024). Both types aim to foster trust-based collaboration between parents and schools, which is particularly relevant in countries like Denmark, where parents have a legally mandated influence on their child's schooling.

In the US, these models have been critically assessed for example by Kirkland et al. (2012). Their findings show that although there are high-quality models that offer care and school readiness, they represent a minority (Kelley et al., 2023). The most widespread models are school-related home visits, with evaluations clearly showing links between family engagement, the frequency of home visits, and improved academic outcomes for students.

Over the past 40 years, Scandinavian research has primarily focused on two themes: relation-building and introductory socio-pedagogically oriented visits targeting children and youth from marginalized backgrounds with special needs (Kelley et al., 2023). In Denmark, research has concentrated mainly on relationship-building home visits (Ottosen et al., 2022). Early childhood researcher Hansen (2016), together with colleagues from the Danish University of Education, conducted the project *The Student in Focus* (2015-2018), in which systematic, relationship-building home visits were carried out based on a welcome brochure sent to parents before their child started at the institution. The aim was to inform parents about practical matters related to their child's coming institutional life. The visits were intended to familiarize parents with the educational opportunities provided by the school, without any expectation of input or feedback from the parents. These visits were scheduled while the child was attending the institution and lasted approximately one hour each.

In addition, research on school-based home visits has aimed to strengthen socio-pedagogical efforts in collaboration with families. Such projects have been implemented in various Danish municipalities in cooperation with professionals such as public health nurses and social workers (Hansen, 2016). These initiatives aimed to inform families about possible support from public services and to build trust among professionals, enabling interdisciplinary interventions for the benefit of the student.

The significant decline in teachers' and educators' use of home visits as a pedagogical tool can largely be attributed to the structural and political conditions that govern their work particularly the lack of financial support. Increasing emphasis on standardized teaching methods and measurable outcomes has reduced the space for flexible, relationship-building initiatives. This shift reflects broader changes in priorities, where individualized strategies that acknowledge

students' home environments and personal challenges have been deprioritized in favor of methods that promote administrative and financial efficiency (Nørgaard & Astrup Bæk, 2016).

In addition to budget cuts in municipal education funding, an increasing reliance on digital communication platforms between school and home has diminished the perceived need for in-person contact. This has limited teachers' ability to establish and maintain personal relationships through home visits with students and their families. In the few instances where home visits still occur, they typically take place in acute crisis situations such as after abuse or in cases of severe distress, indicating a significant shift in how and when pedagogical resources are deployed. Home visits have become a systemic reaction to crisis, representing a move away from proactive, relational pedagogy toward a more reactive, crisis-driven approach. This underscores a broader trend in which current school governance and policy favor short-term administrative and economic considerations over long-term relational and educational benefits.

4. Critique of the Development in the Use of Home Visits in the School System

The critique of how home visits are used within the school system highlights a worrying trend. In the past, home visits played a central role in strengthening the connection between school and home, offering teachers valuable insights into students' lives outside the classroom. These insights could reveal hidden resources and potential in students, but they were rarely incorporated into the school's core task: teaching. However, schools through their daily interaction with students have a unique opportunity to involve parents in school life and to let students' individual backgrounds shape pedagogical and didactic approaches. The diversity in parents' experiences and expectations of the school requires that teachers develop competencies to navigate and understand the living conditions of children and families in a society marked by social and cultural divides. This becomes especially relevant during external crises such as pandemics, which can have serious consequences for students experiencing school refusal (Ottosen et al., 2022).

A deeper understanding of students' home environments can offer teachers a more nuanced view of students' strengths and vulnerabilities, which is essential for creating an inclusive learning culture in which all students feel recognized. Research has shown a significant correlation between pre-existing conditions related to well-being and behavior, and the experience of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, where loneliness emerged as a prominent problem (Ottosen et al., 2022). Children and young people spend a substantial part of their day in school, and studies show that up to 40% of students feel time-pressure, which negatively impacts their enjoyment of school (Jeppesen et al., 2020). This pressure, combined with experiences of loneliness or bullying, can make school a challenging environment for many students.

When home visits are primarily used as a crisis response, the opportunity to build an ongoing relationship between school and home is lost. Home visits can give teachers a deeper understanding of students' everyday lives, family values, and cultural backgrounds, which can support a pedagogical approach that is differentiated through teaching (Cordsen et al., 2024). Additionally, home visits can serve as a tool for enhancing the inclusion of students from diverse backgrounds, enabling teachers to adapt their practices based on fuller knowledge of

students' cultural and social contexts (Gilliam & Gulløv, 2012).

This issue can be understood considering the structural and political frameworks within which schools and teachers operate. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the school functions as an institution that reproduces existing social structures and divisions through selective educational and socialization processes. The structures of the school and the values promoted through education tend to favor forms of cultural capital, often benefiting students from socially privileged backgrounds (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Former professor of political science Ove Kaj Pedersen's concept of the "competition state" offers a modern interpretation of the school's role, in which the education system is increasingly viewed as a tool to enhance national economic competitiveness through standardization and measurement (Pedersen, 2011). This performance-oriented framework often prioritizes the measurement of academic outcomes over the impact of relational efforts involving the home. The emphasis on competition-oriented competencies developed within the school thus reinforces the school's reproductive function and challenges teachers' ability to adapt teaching to the diverse needs and circumstances of students.

Although today's school operates within these structural and societal constraints, teachers still act as autonomous agents in their daily work with students. As primary facilitators of both learning and relationships, teachers occupy a unique position that supports student well-being and learning in ways that extend beyond the formal boundaries of schooling (Cordsen et al., 2024). Through their daily interactions with students and parents, teachers gain insight into children's individual needs and can tailor their pedagogical approaches accordingly. This position also enables them to advocate for the value of home visits to school leadership and policy makers. However, this requires that home visits are implemented in a systematic way. In the following sections, we therefore outline how FoK/I can frame such systematic practice and illustrate it through a concrete case of school refusal.

5. The FoK-Inspired Home Visit

Funds of Knowledge (FoK) refers to the social and cultural capital exchanged, applied, and reshaped within the home and local community. This form of capital is recognized by the networks or communities that co-develop it with the student over time. It encompasses inherited knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are relevant to the student's ability to navigate everyday life and its challenges. This capital is carried by individuals acknowledged within the student's social networks. FoK emphasizes what students, and their families (and networks) know and do in their daily lives. When students enter school with a rich cultural and intellectual background, these resources should naturally be acknowledged and developed within the educational setting.

The concept of FoK was developed in the early 1990s by Luis Moll and Norma Gonzalez (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014) as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (1992, p. 133).

It originated as a pedagogical intervention in which local schoolteachers, in collaboration with

university researchers, explored how families in a given community learn, what kinds of knowledge they value, and how this knowledge is shared across networks of friends, neighbors, and coworkers. The aim was to identify knowledge resources and learning practices that are often overlooked or undervalued by the majority, which tends to focus solely on the perceived deficiencies of vulnerable students. Moll and his colleagues employed a critical ethnographic approach to give families a voice in sharing the dynamics of their life circumstances, work, and daily relations.

The FoK concept and more recent capital theories rooted in the foundational work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu examines how knowledge, skills, and resources shape people's social experiences and opportunities. Contemporary theories of capital often focus on more fluid, dynamic, and group-based forms of capital, contrasting with Bourdieu's original formulation, which tied capital strictly to the values, knowledge, and behavior of the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1986; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Atkinson, 2011; Stahl et al., 2024). In Bourdieu's view, capital is always reproduced in school because the school consistently represents the dominant social class.

Funds of Identity (FoI) refers to another form of capital: the "micro-knowledge" of everyday life that individuals constantly adapt to specific circumstances. For example, a carpenter may pass on knowledge of wood to his son, or a mother may pass on her values regarding premarital sex to both her sons and daughters. While FoK explains the transmission of certain knowledge, FoI captures how this knowledge manifests individually, for example, how a particular student expresses it in school. Polemically, one might say that FoK/I represents the given conditions and constraints that prevent minorities and marginalized groups from accessing the values of the dominant class within the educational system (Oughton, 2010).

Over the past decade, the FoK concept has evolved into a kind of post hoc framework for evaluating the effects of teachers' use of students' backgrounds in their pedagogical practice. Funds of Identity refers to how a student's personal history and relationships are transformed into a unique way of being in the world. It captures the student's individual self-understanding, ways of expressing themselves, and typical reactions in school—even when they share a similar social and cultural background with their peers (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Esteban-Guitart & Llopart, 2017). For clarity, this article focuses only on the home visit as an ex-ante resource- and relationship-building practice for the teacher's use of this information in teaching. Hence, the combined term FoK/I. In this sense, the home visit is treated not as an evaluation of what has already taken place in school but as an anticipatory effort to build relationships and mobilize resources that can shape future teaching. This kind of practice involves making predictions and plans to secure necessary resources and establish supportive relationships to achieve future goals, such as those in business, project management, and investment.

Moll and his colleagues were aware that such a plastic notion of capital might lead to the expectation that parents and other community members could serve as unpaid teaching assistants, supporting the school's reproduction of dominant norms through their knowledge of the student (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Instead, teachers by virtue of their professional

expertise should transform parents' perspectives into pedagogical tools that integrate FoK/I into subject content. Moll criticized the widespread "volunteer parent" practice in the U.S., where parents are made co-responsible for their children's academic performance. Often, this happens because volunteerism is prevalent, parents feel obliged, and students are more easily subjected to the dominant class ideology when it is their own parent delivering instruction.

When teachers discover what students can do in interaction with their families, they gain a deeper understanding of the students' possibilities within the school system. This enables teachers to adjust instruction based on the student's actual competencies rather than perceived deficiencies. The goal is not to fill gaps, but to build a mountain on an as-yet-unrecognized foundation. Moll himself notes that the pedagogical and didactic use of FoK/I constitutes a classroom-based and active resistance against reducing students to passive agents within class society. He emphasizes that FoK/I is a "positive list" of possibilities not a deficiency list that serves only to justify marginalization (Moll, 2010).

Such insight enables a more nuanced and effective pedagogical approach, in which parents and other members of the student's home environment become ex ante partners, rather than being held responsible for potential shortcomings in the student's school performance.

Here, Moll appears clearly to be inspired by Anthony Giddens' structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). This theory, with its focus on reflexive and rational actions, explains how behavior in a knowledge community is formed and transformed. According to Giddens, there is a reflexive monitoring and rationalization of behavior within the home, where the goal is continuously to reconstruct a shared understanding of an agreement on narratives about experiences. When families interact with friends and other families, children become active observers in the exchange of goods, services, and symbolic capital that underpins the daily function of the household (Bourdieu, 1986; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Children and adults learn the social rules and conventions that apply and adapt accordingly. The reward is that they become part of a family community that provides learning and protection through collective effort. In situations where different structural roles within the family (*e.g.*, mother and uncles) are activated, external school demands may clash with the family's traditional approaches to norms and behavior. Moll suggests that over time, teachers should embrace their role as mediators and "collectors" of insights—individuals who act in the best interest of the student while respecting the family's cultural coherence (Boland & Tengasi, 1995).

Moll argued that when teachers alone define and impose cultural capital in alignment with the curriculum, students from educationally marginalized backgrounds withdraw or resist this dominance. Through years of conducting FoK/I-inspired home visits, Moll and his collaborators found that:

(a) These students were often unprepared for school life compared to their peers, and

(b) This unpreparedness led schools to initiate costly and ineffective special education measures.

Instead, teachers should systematically visit students' families, learning to acknowledge that valuable learning occurs both inside and outside school and that both environments can enrich

each other.

6. An Example of School Refusal and the Application of a FoK/I-Inspired Home Visit

FoK/I has the potential to address school refusal by creating a learning environment that incorporates the student's personal experiences and cultural background. School refusal often arises when a student feels alienated from school and its subjects or perceives school as irrelevant to their life. By integrating the student's knowledge and cultural experiences, FoK/I can make learning more meaningful, engaging, and energizing as seen in the following case analysis, based on a school visit we conducted. The case is presented as an anonymized composite vignette, drawing on several home visits and consultations conducted by the authors in Danish schools.

Mira's family moved from Aalborg to the island of Funen, where she started 5th grade in 2019. However, after about six months, her parents felt that she had not settled in. She had neither invited classmates' home nor been invited to others' homes. Just before the COVID-19 lockdown, she repeatedly complained of stomach aches in the morning, and her parents often had to find emergency childcare solutions. After schools reopened, Mira returned for only a week before the school called her father to pick up a distressed and crying Mira.

Her parents' frustration grew, as they struggled to understand her challenges, especially since Mira's two older siblings had never experienced similar issues. Her father, originally from Germany and working as a foreman at a local machine factory, and her mother, who works part-time at a nursing home 15 kilometers away, were at a loss. During our first home visit, Mira explained that math lessons at her new school were different from what she was used to, and in Danish class she felt there was more discussion than direct instruction. At home, Mira spent time chatting with old classmates, drawing, and helping her parents with household chores.

We used the FoK/I framework here to connect the curriculum with Mira's lived experiences: if she were able to actively use her own skills and cultural practices in the classroom supported didactically by the teacher she would be more likely to find school meaningful and relevant. These experiences could increase her engagement and reduce the sense of disconnection from her classmates, which otherwise could lead to even greater school aversion.

The teacher visited Mira and her parents at home, focusing on understanding what matters to Mira. At first, the conversations avoided school and absence. The teacher listened and asked follow-up questions based on Mira's interests in her drawing, when she began, and who might have inspired her. This created a snowball effect of themes, and the teacher introduced new topics based on Mira's responses. The following week, the teacher continued these interest-based conversations without referencing school.

After a few weeks, the teacher begins by mentioning other students' struggles with school that Mira can relate to. This signals to Mira that the teacher knows and recognizes her as part of the school and class environment. This recognition is reinforced when the teacher encourages Mira to visit the class for a few hours, during which she can choose her activities and come and go freely within the school and with prior agreement with her family.

If Mira accepts this, the teacher adjusts class activities to align with her personal learning style, integrating her into the student group. Drawing is used as much as possible. Mira realizes that all students work at their own pace, with no pressure to "keep up." Before starting assignments, Mira and potentially other students are given time to prepare and familiarize themselves with the task. The teacher supports this slower, more deliberate preparation process by valuing the results it produces, such as neat handwriting and detailed drawings, rather than strict academic answers.

The teacher explains to the class that people behave differently depending on context—for example, we are quieter around older people because they may not tolerate noise as well as younger individuals. Students are encouraged to share how their families respond to noise, which varies based on personal and cultural experiences. Mira shares that her mother needs quiet after night shifts at the nursing home.

Understanding how behavior adapts to different environments helps students respect and be respected. The teacher uses class time to discuss how behavior is valued differently in different settings, for example, at home versus at school. Some students adapt naturally, while others need to practice. The teacher seeks support from families and the broader community to help students navigate social norms.

Mira describes how behavior differs in her German family, where formal address like "Sie" is used for elders, compared to her family in Jutland, where such formalities are not observed. The teacher incorporates these cultural differences into lessons, discussing communication styles and how physical touch is interpreted differently across cultures.

As Mira feels seen and respected, the teacher can begin tailoring instruction to her personal learning needs and home-based competencies, making education more relevant and engaging for both her and her classmates.

7. Method: Home Visits within the FoK/I Framework

As noted in the introduction, this article is primarily theoretical and conceptual in nature. It mobilizes FoK/I and related sociological concepts to re-think the role of home visits, and it uses the Mira vignette as an illustrative example rather than as part of a larger empirical dataset. The case is based on the authors' professional experiences with school refusal and home visits in Danish schools, but no systematic sampling or formal analysis procedures are claimed.

By examining an individual's Funds of Knowledge and Funds of Identity (FoK/I), educators can uncover the potential in what a student knows and does. Schools can use this method to understand why some students succeed in completing their education while others drop out. Following the implementation of school reforms in Denmark from 1992 to 2024, attention has increasingly focused on the respective responsibilities of schools and parents in shaping a child into a student. This collaboration defines the distinct contributions that schools and families can offer.

The Mira case illustrates the core element of the FoK method—conversations with a school-averse student and her family about their knowledge and experiences, followed by a

pedagogical and didactic reflection on the conversation to better integrate the student into the educational system. Key characteristics of this method include:

The conversation takes place in the student's home, involving the parents. It differs from traditional parent-teacher conferences by focusing on exploring and articulating household knowledge rather than conducting a structured "interrogation" of the student and family. According to Moll, this approach strengthens ties between the school and the local community, as the teacher gains insight into how the student interacts within their family and social networks.

In practice, it is easier and more effective for two school staff members to attend the home visit. The teacher leads the conversation through questions and active listening, while the colleague observes body language, topic shifts, and the family's reactions. The conversation may be recorded to facilitate post-visit reflection. Having two adults present ensures the conversation can be used to develop didactic models for integrating the gained knowledge into subjects such as language arts or other curriculum areas. The experiences are documented for later analysis and use.

The conversation can be complemented by methods such as observation and semi-structured interviews, which enhance the pedagogical response that follows.

A list of topics for conversations with students and their families can be helpful. A central challenge is avoiding the reproduction of stereotypical or fixed views of the home and family. Instead, the focus should be on uncovering the dynamic aspects of family life, with the student as the focal point. This topic list can be used during both conversations and observations. There are no limits to possible conversation topics; they may include agriculture, economics, cultural practices, political beliefs, the family's origins, and plans for future. In FoK/I research, it is recommended to group questions under four main themes:

> *Family*: How the family perceives itself in relation to others inside and outside the community, specific home practices, types of paid work performed by family members, and the skills acknowledged within the family.
>
> *Local community and social networks*: How the family interacts with and contributes to the local community, particularly in terms of network development and the exchange of knowledge and resources.
>
> *Peer group:* The student's social relationships and activities both inside and outside school, including friendships and interests.
>
> *Media and popular culture*: The student's engagement with media, including what they watch, play, chat about, and discuss with friends.

An ethnographic-sociological approach is valuable in these conversations, as noted by Kristjansen and Krogstrup (cited in Holmberg, 1999). In Luis Moll's American FoK/I projects, a preparatory phase was often included, during which researchers and teachers worked together to coordinate the use of interviews, observations, and home visits. This collaboration gave teachers insight into how to systematically integrate knowledge from fieldwork to improve the

academic outcomes and development of vulnerable students.

The goal is to avoid premature conclusions based on preconceived notions during home observations. The richness of empirical data from ethnographic fieldwork can inspire teachers and researchers to develop deeper and more precise interpretations of students' competencies and behaviors within their family environments (Schwartz et al., 1955).

For practitioners, the method section should therefore be read as a set of design principles for FoK/I-inspired home visits—rather than as a blueprint for a fully evaluated intervention model.

8. Procedure—From Knowledge to Application

Familiarity with the local community is essential for understanding and conceptualizing the observations and conversations that take place during home visits. Before the visit, teachers should be well-informed about the characteristics of the local area, including employment opportunities, leisure activities, part-time jobs, and the skillsets available within the community. It is also important to understand the mental "meeting points" inside and outside the home, as well as the family's social history such as memories of migration from rural to urban settings or from a home country to a host country. The family's occupational activities, whether wage labor or self-employment, are equally central, as these experiences often form the foundation of the knowledge that adults in the family share with their children.

Following a home visit, teachers and educators gain insights into the resources present in both the family and the local community. These insights can be used to create didactic approaches that draw on students' out-of-school experiences and make learning meaningful within the institutional setting they share with peers from diverse backgrounds. To support this process, teachers can benefit from participating in pedagogical study groups where experiences and ideas are shared. These groups can convene formally within the school or informally in relaxed settings, such as cafés.

Ideas developed in study groups can be implemented into daily school practice through teaching sequences that are relevant to students. The study group serves as a platform for discussion and reflection on what has worked and what can be improved. The ultimate goal is to "didacticize" pedagogical approaches in a way that integrates the curriculum and addresses issues relevant to the entire teaching team.

Concretely, schools can begin with small-scale pilot projects in which a limited number of teachers conduct FoK/I-inspired home visits with clearly defined goals (*e.g.*, reducing school refusal in one class), followed by joint reflection in study groups and modest adaptation of curriculum units.

9. Discussion

FoK/I is considered an effective didactic and pedagogical tool for all children, but it has been particularly applied to children from marginalized groups in the U.S., Australia, and the UK such as children of Central American immigrants and Native Americans. While FoK/I in these contexts often focuses on integration into Western culture through education, we argue that the approach can also be used to include the growing number of children experiencing sudden

challenges with school attendance, as in Mira's case. The primary aim of FoK/I is to inspire teachers to develop what Edwards (2005, following Giddens, 1984) describes as relational agency—the ability to work within a specific context in collaboration with colleagues, students, family members, and others in the community. This collaboration can identify resources that challenge institutionally entrenched perceptions of deficit in children who do not fit the normative curricular framework.

FoK/I promotes a perspective of children as individuals with a rich and potential-laden history, which can open new developmental pathways for both children and their teachers. Through dialogue in teacher study groups, educators can shift focus from children's limitations to their possibilities. The goal is to develop and implement a pedagogy grounded in the student's personal life experiences, supported by collaboration with others. Moll often initiates activities in the home or local community before school-based interventions, gradually enhancing the child's self-worth and agency before institutional life begins. Moll believed the best setting for this was the secure environment of the home or neighborhood; in most cases, it is sufficient for teachers to get to know the student on their own terms through these visits.

Lightfoot (2003) argues that a closer connection between teachers and parents can help reduce the development of school refusal when students experience home and school as working together to support their learning. This kind of relational support broadens the school's learning environment, allowing the student's cultural capital to be recognized and integrated into instruction. By linking everyday life with curricular learning, continuity is established, which can be particularly motivating for students at risk of disengagement, as their lived experiences are validated and seen as valuable components in the learning process (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Criticism has been raised regarding the academic value of home visits within the FoK framework. They argue that home visits may not influence students' perception of the importance of institutional knowledge and may overestimate the role of everyday knowledge as a foundation for academic success (Young et al., 2014). Institutional "school knowledge" is described as having higher status and encompasses curriculum content, as Bourdieu suggested, in contrast to "everyday knowledge," which is derived from students' cultural experiences and lived contexts (Zipin, 2009). Institutional knowledge is typically found in subjects like mathematics, science, history, geography, English, and art—but only on the condition that students agree to learn according to the canonical disciplinary standards required by future academic pathways (White, 2019).

A response to this critique can be summarized in the concept of *contextualization,* which as an ethnographic and didactic principle involves creating connections and relationships between people in a local environment (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Pedagogically and didactically, contextualization is used to adapt learning, based on officially defined curricula, to students' personal experiences and backgrounds. By incorporating context, the teacher can build on students' prior knowledge and their informal learning experiences from the home and other environments (Esteban-Guitart & Llopart, 2017). This principle manifests in three interrelated didactic strategies:

(a) Integrating academic content with other knowledge that children acquire at home, in

school, and in the community.

(b) Guiding and supporting students in making connections between their personal experiences and the knowledge or concepts being taught in school.

(c) Helping students understand subject matter through affirming and personalized relationships.

These approaches are central to creating meaningful and inclusive learning experiences that respect and value students' backgrounds and individual strengths.

At the same time, FoK/I-inspired home visits raise a number of ethical and practical challenges that limit their implementation. Home visits require informed consent from students and parents, careful attention to privacy and data protection, and sensitivity to unequal power relations when teachers enter families' private spaces. They also demand time and emotional labor from teachers, which may be difficult to reconcile with existing workloads and timetable constraints. Moreover, not all families will feel comfortable inviting school staff into their homes, which risks reproducing inequalities if only some students benefit from FoK/I-informed initiatives. These limitations underline the need for clear local guidelines, professional supervision, and realistic expectations when schools decide to work with home visits.

Finally, the article itself is limited by its conceptual design and reliance on one illustrative case. More systematic empirical research—such as longitudinal studies of FoK/I-based home visit programs in different school contexts—is needed to evaluate the impact on attendance, well-being, and learning outcomes for students with school refusal.

10. Conclusion

FoK/I represents a critical counter-response to the growing trend in the education sector of prioritizing quantifiable outcomes over culturally responsive learning development. This trend has contributed to the deprioritization of home visits, which have traditionally served to strengthen the connection between school, student, and home, recognizing the home's essential role in children's learning and personal development. Today's education system with its narrow focus on standardized, normative frameworks risks overlooking the rich cultural and individual contributions that students bring into learning environments.

FoK/I offers a revitalized approach that not only reintroduces home visits as a valuable pedagogical strategy but also enriches this method by actively utilizing and appreciating the resources students and their families contribute. This approach supports the creation of more inclusive and differentiated instruction that respects and values students' unique backgrounds, skills, and knowledge. Through FoK/I, schools become better equipped to bridge institutional learning environments with students' home and cultural contexts, thus fostering mutual respect and understanding.

FoK/I-inspired home visits transform the role of teachers from traditional transmitters of predetermined knowledge to facilitators who recognize and integrate students' lived experiences into the curriculum. This transformation contributes to increased engagement and

motivation, particularly for students who may feel marginalized or disengaged within a standardized educational system. By implementing instruction that is relevant and meaningful to each student, a school culture that values diversity and inclusion is promoted.

Home visits based on FoK/I principles provide a counterbalance to current education policy trends by valuing relational and contextual aspects as highly as academic outcomes. This is crucial for creating a fair and holistic education that views students not just as recipients of knowledge but as active participants with valuable perspectives and resources. By acknowledging and incorporating these resources, teachers can design instruction deeply rooted in students' own lives and experiences, thereby enhancing both self-worth and learning.

Moreover, home visits foster stronger school-home relationships, contributing to a more integrated understanding of the student's full context. Therefore, FoK should not be seen merely as a technique for gathering information but as a fundamentally different pedagogical approach that demands deep understanding and respect for students' backgrounds and potential. By revitalizing and strengthening the practice of home visits, educational institutions can better meet the diverse needs of their students, support their academic development, and prepare them to navigate and contribute to an increasingly complex society.

For practitioners and policymakers, several concrete implications follow from this analysis:

(1) Schools can pilot FoK/I-inspired home visits with a small group of students experiencing school refusal, with clear aims and follow-up reflection.

(2) Teacher education and in-service training should include basic competences in ethnographic listening, ethical home–school collaboration, and the didactic use of FoK/I.

(3) Municipal and school leaders can allocate limited, but protected, time resources for relational work such as home visits, recognizing their long-term preventive potential.

(4) Local guidelines should address privacy, consent, and workload so that home visits become a sustainable and equitable part of the school's support system rather than an ad hoc crisis response.

Taken together, these steps can help translate the conceptual promise of FoK/I-inspired home visits into actionable pedagogical practice aimed at including students with school refusal in meaningful learning.

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