

“THIS IS HOW WE DO THINGS”. ACCULTURATION OF IMMIGRANT TEACHERS: ELUSIVE CRITICAL LEADERSHIP

Delight Sibanda

Department of Education Leadership and Management, Faculty of Education
University of Johannesburg

B-Ring 418A, Auckland Park Campus, Cnr. Kingsway and University Roads
Auckland Park, Johannesburg, 2006, Republic of South Africa

E-mail address: delightsibanda@yahoo.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7616-2194>

Sadi Seyama-Mokhaneli

Department of Education Leadership and Management, Faculty of Education
University of Johannesburg

B-Ring 418A, Auckland Park Campus, Cnr. Kingsway and University Roads
Auckland Park, Johannesburg, 2006, Republic of South Africa

E-mail address: sseyama@uj.ac.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5234-0555>

ABSTRACT

Aim. The research aims to critically examine immigrant teachers' acculturation into independent South African schools. It also raises awareness of the absence of school leadership's preparedness and competence to facilitate immigrant teachers' integrative acculturation.

Methods. The research used a critical qualitative case study design and purposively sampled participants within a population of inner-city independent schools to ensure they were professional immigrant teachers working in a South African independent school and experiencing acculturation. Data was generated through focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews and analysed thematically.

Results. The results show that immigrant teachers experience acculturation and adaptation challenges, facing diversity as division. As leaders continuously articulate schools' visions and missions, they reinforce beliefs, norms, and values, which become the lens through which teachers, learners and other stakeholders engage in their daily activities. Thus, results also illuminate a prevailing authoritarian leadership that en-

forces cultural assimilation and separation, undermining immigrant teachers' identities, values, capabilities, and equal status within the school context.

Conclusion. Immigrant teachers transform South African schools into cosmopolitan and multicultural settings with incredible cultural dimensions for learners to learn and broaden their global citizenship. Thus, these diverse schools need culturally conscious and effective leaders who deliberately exercise power to confront inequity and marginalisation, affirm minority cultures and foster cultural integration.

Keywords: acculturation, cultural diversity, critical leadership studies, dialectical leadership, immigrant teachers

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The abolition of apartheid in South Africa facilitated an open democratic system that changed its global politics and opened its borders. The apartheid system created immigration policies that discriminated against black African immigrants (Hammar et al., 2010). The democratic system, however, took a more equitable approach to immigrants with more relaxed migration laws and policies, enabling many black African immigrants to enter South Africa more easily. In this context, public and independent schools enrolled learners and teachers of different races, ethnicities, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds, including immigrant learners and teachers (Vandeyar et al., 2014). Schools also opened to immigrant teachers to address teacher shortages, particularly for mathematics and science (Weda & De Villiers, 2019). The economic prosperity of South Africa, among other sub-Saharan African countries, also drew more immigrant workers including teachers from Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (McKay et al., 2018; Vandeyar et al., 2014). Consequently, South African schools' cultural dynamics shifted from homogenous into heterogenous cultural spaces.

The global interconnectedness of different countries following migration (Alaverdov, 2023; Lønsmann, 2014) turned South Africa into a highly cosmopolitan society (Meier & Hartell, 2009), promising culturally dynamic organisations, including schools. On the contrary, such cultural diversity is not embraced in some schools, and immigrant teachers often struggle with adapting to fit into a new culture and unwelcoming hosts (McKay et al., 2018). They are confronted with social injustices and violations of their human rights—marginalisation, disregard, and exploitation (McKay et al., 2018). Learners ridicule immigrant teachers in classrooms because of their language differences, which affect their accents and pronunciation; consequently, their competency is disparaged (Manik, 2013). Their colleagues speak the host country's language in staff rooms and meetings, excluding them from the social spaces (Manik, 2013) and administrative decision-making (Lønsmann, 2014). These experiences raised fundamental questions regarding immigrant teachers' acculturation.

The cultural diversity of immigrant teachers called upon school leaders to effectively lead multicultural teaching staff (Manning, 2003) and ensure welcoming, respectful, and equitable settings and innovatively exploit the benefits of a diverse workforce. Leadership in organisations is the primary driver of the enactments of culture. Given this fundamental interconnection between leadership and culture, effective, critical, culturally responsive leadership is necessary (Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016).

With the high numbers of immigrant teachers with different cultures taking up posts in independent schools (Vandeyar et al., 2014), interrogating their experiences is vital. However, there is a limited examination of immigrant teachers' acculturation dynamics in South Africa (McKay et al., 2018). While Tshativa Makula (2018) reported on immigrant teachers' experiences of social injustice in some inner-city schools, insights into the varying modes of immigrant teachers' acculturation are still elusive. Following this understanding, the researchers examined how the exploitation of the positional and culturally accorded power influenced educational contexts' authority, control, and inequalities where leader-follower relations are asymmetric and at polar ends (Seyama, 2018).

To answer the question, "How are immigrant teachers experiencing acculturation in an independent school in South Africa?", researchers drew on Berry's acculturation model and dialectical leadership to critically explore the acculturation of immigrant teachers to determine their cultural needs within a diverse work context. The paper first engages Berry's acculturation model (assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalisation) to offer a critical understanding of immigrant teachers' acculturation challenges. It then illuminates the problematisation of immigrant teachers' acculturation. The following section elaborates on dialectical leadership (consciousness, deliberation, resistance) to build a foundation for critical analysis and interpretation. Then the paper provides a brief account of the research methodology, followed by the presentation and discussion of the results. Lastly, the paper concludes by illuminating the implications for critical leadership in the acculturation of immigrant teachers.

BERRY'S ACCULTURATION MODEL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Organisational culture is a system of shared attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms which ground the way of doing things and human relations in an organisation (Martin, 2014). It is also expressed through unique symbols, artefacts, rituals, or discourses shaped and reproduced as people interact (Seymen, 2006). Martell L. Teasley (2016) posits that "a school's organisational culture provides a sense of identity, promotes achievement orientation, helps shape standards and patterns of behaviour, creates distinct ways of doing things, and determines the direction for future growth" (p. 3).

The advantages of culture, as noted, are feasible when school culture is positive. Negative culture fosters ineffectiveness, poor learner achievement, loss of trust, poor communication, conflict, job dissatisfaction and low morale (Teasley, 2016). Therefore, school leaders need a deep understanding of how a school's culture influences the climate, human relations, performance effectiveness, and learner achievement. Moreover, they should intentionally create an environment that accepts, affirms, and supports cultural diversity. While schools develop their unique culture, they are influenced by society's dominant culture (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016). This makes it difficult for a school culture to shift when necessary.

Cultural diversity encompasses people with different cultures continuously engaging in social settings (Seymen, 2006). In the differences of ethnicity, race, nationality, language, beliefs, norms, values, and behaviour (Martin, 2014), there are hierarchical power differentials determined by the presence of a dominant and subordinate culture. In a space where people of different cultures join a workplace dominated by another culture (the host culture), there are possibilities of acculturation—cultural and psychological changes at an individual (attitude, beliefs, identities) and group level (social and cultural systems) (Berry, 2001). And “at the cultural level, collective activities and social institutions become altered, and at the psychological level, there are changes in an individual's daily behavioural repertoire and sometimes in experienced stress” (Sam & Berry, 2010, p. 472). People acculturate and adapt in diverse ways to a changing culture and varying experiences, primarily underpinned by an organisation's leadership approach to acculturation.

John W. Berry et al. (1997) developed an acculturation model to illuminate the varying acculturation modes, encompassing assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalisation. As a theoretical framework, this model is fundamental in providing insights into the nuanced dimensions of immigrants' cultural experiences in the workplace. In the context of immigrant teachers in South African schools experiencing a collision of diverse cultures, the acculturation model is a helpful lens to understand their acculturation process and its impact on their well-being and performance. Such an understanding could broaden a humane awareness of their struggles and possibly guide a leadership approach towards meaningful acculturation practices.

Assimilation

Cultural assimilation demands that immigrants relinquish their original culture and fully adopt the new country's dominant culture (Cox & Finley-Nickelson, 1991). Assimilation “decultures” immigrants—strips them of their identities, attitudes, beliefs, values, languages, and traditional practices with adverse psychological and social outcomes (Berry et al., 1997). In South Africa, immigrant teachers are unwelcomed, treated with hostility, and isolated (Vandeyar et al., 2014). They are forced to adopt

the dominant culture's norms, behaviour, and languages (Mashau, 2012). Consequently, abandon their culture. Immigrant teachers are confronted with the challenge of assimilating the host country's curriculum and the related teaching pedagogies (Makonye, 2017). Any hints of immigrant teachers' ways of teaching lead to reprimand and punishment (Vandeyar et al., 2014).

Integration

Integration emphasises a plurality of cultures, enabling people of different cultures to hold onto some aspects of their culture and adopt others from a different group (Berry et al., 1997). From this perspective, immigrants as a minority group keep some of their cultures and adopt some of the host's culture, while the hosts accept the immigrants' culture. Integration attempts to foster equitable value recognition among the majority and minority cultural groups. However, the minority group often ought to adopt more of the majority group's cultural aspects (Berry, 2001). In such organisational contexts, teachers could adapt to some of the school's culture, maintain some of the original culture's aspects and draw on these in work socialisation and performance. Pluralism enables people to simultaneously adopt varying cultural identities and practices depending on the setting (Berry, 2001). In this way, people of diverse cultures socialise easily and understand each other (Cox & Finley-Nickelson, 1991).

The multicultural context of schools demands critical and culturally responsive leadership (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016). Furthermore, the promotion of culturally diverse developmental training (Berry et al., 1997) is necessary to create harmonious relations and reduce conflict and cultivate pluralism (Cox & Finley-Nickelson, 1991). The increased social relations and participation of different cultural groups could facilitate the transformation of policies and resources to achieve equity. With group cohesion, schools could be more effective because trust and transparency are established, there is collaboration and shared decision making, and diverse perspectives are used for problem-solving (Martin, 2014).

Separation

Separation is a maladaptive mode of acculturation where immigrants do not adopt the majority or host culture, choosing to operate within their ethnic norms, beliefs, and practices (Berry, 2001). With separation, diverse cultural groups hold onto their unique norms and values without acknowledging their equitable value, and there is no group cohesion, risking conflict (Martin, 2014). There are intentionally limited interactions (Cox & Finley-Nickelson, 1991); cultural ignorance and bias continue in schools, and minority immigrant teachers are ostracised.

Marginalisation

Marginalisation encompasses minority cultural groups' rejection of their original culture and the majority's culture, and there is "little possibility of cultural maintenance and little interest in housing relations with others" (Berry et al., 1997, p. 297). Marginalisation is sometimes a choice to respond to cultural groups members' conditions. On the other hand, it could be due to majority groups' discriminatory practices that lead to cultural rejection or loss (Cox & Finley-Nickelson, 1991). In organisations, marginalisation could lead to a decultured organisation with no dominant culture (Berry, 2001), promoting fragmentation of systems and practices. Often, immigrant teachers are excluded from strategic organisational participation and decision-making processes (Lønsmann, 2014); thus, they are professionally marginalised (Vandeyar et al., 2014).

Positive acculturation is a challenge in South African schools because of superiority assumptions about the dominant culture and failure to recognise immigrants' value-add. Thus, school-wide multicultural training is essential to provide insights into the varying cultures and conscientise all about the inhumane assimilation practices.

DIALECTICAL LEADERSHIP—A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR LEADING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

Dialectical leadership is a dynamic of critical leadership studies (CLS) exploring leadership's gloomy and untenable dimensions. It critically evaluates how organisational power asymmetries heroises leadership (Collinson, 2014). In this sense, it exposes mainstream leadership's shortcomings in enabling the privileged groups to foster discrimination, disregard and prejudice against the non-dominant groups (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). The adverse work conditions produce employees' anxiety and stress, impacting performance negatively (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012).

From a critical leadership perspective, dialectical leadership examines the dichotomous exploitation of organisational power and politics that produce paradoxes and tensions (Collinson, 2014). Thus, dialectical approaches seek to acknowledge "dichotomies as multiple, intersecting dialectics [that]open up fresh lines of enquiry and generate important insights about the complex and situated relations of power and identity that comprise leadership and followership dynamics" (Collinson, 2014, p. 36). As David Collinson (2018) notes, the "dialectical forms of analysis...explicitly attend to interrelationships, ambiguities, and contradictions in leadership theories and practices" (p. 260). Drawing on such a dialectic analysis, Sadi Seyama (2018) revealed the unique dimensions of dialectical leadership within educational contexts, namely, consciousness, deliberation, and resistance, which within their interconnectedness ground alternative leadership practices that engage leadership as a relational and liberating process. Dialectical leadership does not dichotomise leaders and followers;

instead, it recognises the agency of followers to take up leadership when necessary (Collinson, 2018). Dialectical leadership offers an alternative approach to working through the tensions emanating from the dichotomised dominant school culture and immigrant teachers' culture within a culturally dominant school setting, repressing immigrant teachers' culture.

Leading consciously encompasses leadership's critical insights into how particular organisational environments influence people's experiences, challenges, and positionalities (Seyama, 2018). Awareness of such interconnectivity facilitates an open, flexible, and collaborative mode of leadership enactment (Jones, 2012), where varying voices are heard. Leading consciously espouses different ways of being, thinking and doing, aligning with the organisation's dynamics of culturally diverse employees. Therefore, conscious leaders are expected to accept "an authentic and open self-awareness for unrestrained emancipatory leadership thinking" (Seyama, 2018, p. 232), affirming and embracing immigrant teachers' diversity and promoting their integration. Leaders' lack of sensitivity towards transforming environments, human resources and related experiences could blind their understanding of "unique human and change process dynamics of transformation, thus failing to "lead through them" (Anderson & Anderson, 2011, p. 51).

Leading deliberately encompasses transparent leadership practices that embrace varying voices, including oppositional ones (Seyama, 2018). It leads through the interconnectivity and interdependence of leaders and followers (Collinson, 2011). In this sense, leaders and followers meaningfully co-exist in organisations; hence followers' agency is also vital. Leading deliberately illuminates leadership as a negotiated, continuous relational process between leaders and followers (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). As a negotiated process, it opens space for a leadership process that moves across the leader and follower continuum (Seyama, 2018). An affirmation of followers' role enables them to tap into their way of doing things, providing effective and meaningful alternative ways of leading.

Dialectical leadership also includes the dimension of leadership's resistance to unenviable policies or conditions (Seyama, 2018). As an enactment of power, leadership could generate resistance in the workplace—"power can be constructive and empowering and/or destructive and oppressive" (Collinson, 2018, p. 261). While traditional leadership perspectives discredit resistance as an illegitimate employee strategy, it is imperative in dislocating power and control (Collinson, 2018). Employees' resistances vary (Zoller & Fairhurst, 2007), for example, work slowdowns or stoppages, industrial actions, obstruction, vandalism, retaining vital evidence, and whistleblowing (Collinson, 2011). Similarly, leaders engage in resistance to confront and disregard organisational policies and practices that disregard employees' autonomy, rights and dignity. From this positionality, leaders should open themselves to exploiting power to establish harmonious and meaningful work environments (Seyama, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case study drew from the critical paradigm to examine exclusionary unequal power dynamics in organisations and open possibilities for liberatory spaces (Taylor & Medina, 2011) due to cultural differences within a school context. To facilitate critical dialogue, a qualitative methodology was appropriate for interrogating participants' experiences in their natural setting and their meaning-making of the phenomena (Gupta & Awasthy, 2015). A single-case study enabled a thorough account of a phenomenon explored and encapsulated participants' daily situational experiences (Yin, 2014), providing micro-level insights into immigrant teachers' experiences of cultural diversity.

The Critical High School (pseudonym) was purposively selected as it offered a relevant case study boasting a diverse learner complement within the city of Johannesburg's South district in South Africa. It was founded in 1995 and has about 800 registered learners, guided by a team of 45 teachers and the principal. The teaching staff comprises South African, Lesotho, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe nationals with diverse cultures. A single case study on acculturation of diverse teacher enabled a deeper interrogation of the contextual dynamics and insights into how immigrant teachers are acculturated. Participants were purposively selected to ensure they were professional immigrant teachers working in a South African private school and experiencing acculturation. Pseudonyms were used to ensure the school and participants' anonymity. Table 1 provides participants' biographical details.

Table 1

Participants' Biographical details

Pseudonym	Gender	Number of years teaching	Number of years in South Africa	Rank
<i>P1. Ndodana</i>	Male	32	20	Academic head
<i>P2. Max</i>	Male	20	15	Soccer coach
<i>P3. Sazini</i>	Female	13	7	Debate facilitator
<i>P4. Manny</i>	Female	24	15	Deputy principal
<i>P5. Cynthia</i>	Female	15	11	Netball coach
<i>P6. Butho</i>	Male	16	10	Head of Department (HOD)
<i>P7. Emma</i>	Female	18	11	HOD
<i>P8. Mano</i>	Male	20	15	Coach and HOD
<i>P9. Andile</i>	Male	21	13	HOD
<i>P10. Jama</i>	Male	25	15	HOD
<i>P11. Ndaba</i>	Male	32	20	Academic head assistant
<i>P12. Mondli</i>	Male	15	15	Teacher and Coach

Pseudonym	Gender	Number of years teaching	Number of years in South Africa	Rank
<i>P13. Sithabile</i>	Female	13	7	Teacher
<i>P14. Vusumuzi</i>	Male	26	13	HOD
<i>P15. Nomazulu</i>	Female	15	11	HOD and netball coach
<i>P16. Mila</i>	Female	24	15	Teacher

Source. Own research.

Data was generated through face-to-face individual semi-structured interviews (five) and two group discussions with five participants each at the school. The interviews were conducted after receiving the ethical clearance from the University of Johannesburg ethics committee, Gauteng department of education and Critical high school principal's permissions. To ensure participants' informed consent, the study's purpose, benefits, and nature of their involvement in the research were clarified. Furthermore, they were also informed of their rights to voluntary participation, safety, anonymity, and confidentiality. Transcribed data were analysed inductively, and emerging themes were constructed through Johnny Saldaña's (2013) manual coding process. Guided by research questions, meaningful phrases and concepts were highlighted, then coded into meaning-making information segments, followed by the delineation of different categories. The emerging themes were then captured and presented accordingly.

Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement, thick descriptions, and member checking. Transferability was established through thick descriptions to clarify the contextual settings in which the phenomenon was explored (Yin, 2014). The researchers established the study's dependability by providing precise details of the research process (Nieuwenhuis, 2016), offering rich descriptions of participants' acculturation experiences. To further ensure dependability, the researchers kept an audit trail that put semi-structured and focus group discussions on record, as well as the iterative data analysis process and construction of themes.

Conformability is researchers' non-bias commitment to establish the findings are constructed from participants' voices (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The one researcher, as the insider, bracketed off her own experiences and related assumptions to focus on participants' experiences and meaning-making. Drawing directly on participants' quotations enabled the authentic representation of participants' voices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through Berry's acculturation model and dialectical leadership's lenses, the study interrogated immigrant teachers' acculturation in a private school. The findings illuminate how a culturally deficient school leadership undermines immigrant teachers'

positive acculturation, with negative consequences for their performance and promotion opportunities. In the absence of school leaders' cultural consciousness and deliberative engagement, immigrant teachers were forced to assimilate, losing their cultural identities and voices. The following themes emerged: a) Authoritarian leadership, b) Marginalisation and inequity, c) Disregard of immigrant teachers, d) Possibilities of integration, and e) Leadership accommodativeness.

Authoritarian Leadership

Participants in this study experience enforced cultural assimilation through a very authoritarian and autocratic leadership in their school. They are not given opportunities to create amenable conditions for their positive acculturation, limiting their ability to contribute to learners' achievement. The hostile setting has pushed immigrant teachers into their enclaves, accepting that "in Rome, you do what the Romans do" (Emma). Hence, there is no space for divergent views on how immigrant teachers' diverse cultures could be acknowledged and integrated to support the school's achievement of its goals. Participants explained:

I would say our current school's leadership style is autocratic, where usually the school personnel are totally in control of everything involving decision-making, planning, and organising everything that happens in the school, and then the rest of us teachers and other colleagues only follow suit what has been commanded to us. (Cynthia) (Sibanda, 2021, p. 48)
...when I look at the leadership in the current school where I am working...they really don't consider the cultures that are there. You bring something new; they will tell you, 'Not here, not in this school; this is how we do things. (Mila) (Sibanda, 2021, p. 48)

Butho also criticised the suppression tactic of authoritarianism, which renders immigrant educators' voiceless, noting "You do not have a voice to use in any way; only if you are in a position of power or are an HOD, then you can do something or have a say in the decisions made in the school" (Sibanda, 2021, p. 57). From participants' perspectives, the school leadership's autocratic practices demand that they follow the school's way of doing things, which has produced a wide power divide between the host country teachers and immigrant teachers, hindering meaningful acculturation. The failure to listen to immigrant teachers' voices undermines effective and meaningful communication, making it difficult for immigrant teachers to operate effectively. This weakens their performance, compromising their self-esteem, professional success, and future work prospects. Authoritarian leadership engenders harsh working conditions, causing stress and poor health (Collinson, 2011). It enforces cultural assimilation to ensure the dominance of the host culture in the school. While assimilation appears to create the practice of shared culture, thus unity, it can be oppressive to immigrants (Berry, 2001). However, facing economic hardships, immigrant teachers accept assimilation

to make a living. The challenges of fully adopting the dominant culture disempowers and destabilises immigrant teachers; hence, they do not enjoy their teaching experiences (Vandeyar et al., 2014).

Marginalisation and Inequity

The study's outcomes illuminate that immigrant teachers suffer cultural prejudice because of their national identity and language in a culturally diverse school, where leadership is culturally illiterate. With their culture and language considered inferior, immigrant teachers are constantly under the brunt of their colleagues' and learners' unfair and hostile treatment. Participants experienced nepotism and unfair preference of the dominant culture, which excluded and marginalised them from the centre of the school's social relations:

In the example of my school, I think cultural diversity has not really been incorporated because teachers are not viewed as equals. Like the structure of my school, leaders come from different countries, so that each leader will favour the people from his country. (Emma) (Sibanda, 2021, p. 50)

Mila was frank about the impact of exclusion on their sense of being, stating, "At times you get to a point whereby there is one dominant culture that will always force you to do things their way, or in some cases, when your own culture is despised, you feel belittled" (Sibanda, 2021, p. 52). Manny and Sazini experienced similar unfair treatment. Manny related, "Personally, I feel there is more given to South Africans than other citizens who are part of staff members... The South Africans are usually treated with soft gloves compared to other teaching staff members" (Sibanda, 2021, p. 51). Sazini revealed, "I sometimes feel discriminated against, and sometimes I feel I did not get equal opportunities as those that belong here" (Sibanda, 2021, p. 51).

Some participants experienced learners' discrimination because of different pronunciations. And learners use it as an excuse for failing, claiming they did not understand. Max explained, "you have learners saying they don't understand how a certain teacher pronounces words, especially when they have failed. They will say they didn't understand the teacher, and then that creates tension" (Sibanda, 2021, p. 50). Worsening the situation, the school leadership did not solve their problems. As Manny observed:

Generally, I felt there is a sense of xenophobia that's lurking in the school between South Africans and Zimbabweans. But there isn't much that the school is doing to do away [sic] with that kind of tension... They tend to give [turn] a blind eye to the situation (Sibanda, 2021, p. 50).

Participants' accounts of their experiences foreground the host country's teachers' perception of cultural superiority, denigrating immigrant teachers' cultural heritage.

Consequently, social relations in the school are fragmented. This reflects South Africa's apartheid history of black people's inferiority, leading to prejudice against other black people from poor African countries. Similar to findings in Judah Paul Makonye's (2017) study, participants observed that their countries' ailing economy was also used as a variable to evaluate their competencies, resulting in perceptions of incapability.

Disregard of Immigrant Teachers

Against the backdrop of a democratic constitution that upholds human rights, participants experience the valorisation of learners' rights at the teachers' expense. With their rights infringed upon, immigrant teachers felt disrespected and disregarded with no control in a host country, thus yearning for their home where they are respected. Participants clarified:

At times, in terms of relationships between teachers and students in South Africa, the immigrant teacher is not given the respect as much as I used to have in the country where I come from. As a result, you get so frustrated at times when a student you are meant to teach does not give you that respect, and you really feel so homesick at times. (Mila) (Sibanda, 2021, p. 52)

Participants like Mila long for the authority and respect they commanded as teachers in their home countries. They experience learners' disrespect because learners' rights precede teachers' rights in South Africa. Consequently, learners are ill-disciplined and perform poorly. Nomazulu reported:

...being a teacher gives you a certain status; you're not just anyone. However, when you enter the educational system here in South Africa, you find that the rights of the learners outweigh those of the teachers. It's always centered on the learner being correct. As a teacher, you find yourself relegated to a second or third-tier position... (Sibanda, 2021, p. 52)

The lack of recognition excludes some immigrant teachers from promotion opportunities, and their career trajectory is severely hampered. Manny noted:

It...has hindered my professional growth when not given equal opportunity at work because of my nationality, where employment equity is based on nationality and citizens first. As a foreigner, I have lost opportunities not based on qualifications, despite my qualifications being above the minimum. (Sibanda, 2021, p. 52)

The South African constitution promotes democracy and guarantees human rights. Therefore, education leaders are obligated to treat all teachers fairly, equally, and justly (Landau et al., 2005). Nevertheless, participants' human rights are being overlooked—they are belittled and ignored by school leaders, learners, and teachers. The biased culture segregates immigrant teachers from the school and larger commu-

nity (where they experience xenophobia) (Vandeyar et al., 2014), promoting a separation model of acculturation. They are forced to keep to themselves, which reduces intercultural contacts necessary for integration.

Immigrant teachers are castigated for their unusual accents and deemed incompetent. They face culture shock, self-doubt, and low self-efficacy (Mashau, 2012). Singh (2013) reported similar experiences among Zimbabwean teachers in Limpopo—in addition to disrespect, they were intimidated and ignored during meetings. The teachers were also ruled out for promotion even when they met the requirements (Singh, 2013), leading to professional relegation (Vandeyar et al., 2014).

Possibilities of Integration

While participants are confronted with marginalisation and disregard, they believe there are possibilities of integration across the school among all the stakeholders. Opportunities for integration presented themselves by celebrating culture days, where learners and teachers display and explain their cultural attires and clothes. To work towards a respectful engagement, Mano recommends a reflective approach on the part of immigrant teachers and deliberate efforts to be more accepting of the other cultures. He explains that “...diversity musn’t mean division. You should embrace diversity and be open to accepting and respecting other cultures. We can’t ignore what’s happening around us; we’re part of a larger community and must acknowledge it” (Sibanda, 2021, p. 55).

Mano further adds that “...various cultures surround you, and I believe there’s an exchange involved where you absorb the positive aspects of different cultures. You then integrate these elements into diversity and inclusivity efforts to propel the organisation forward” (Sibanda, 2021, p. 56). Participants considers the need to relinquish some of their cultural elements that could hinder the integration of the host culture, which promotes respect, unity, cooperation, and consensus-building. Participants allude to the integrative value of sharing traditional foods:

I remember them (South Africans) were shocked when they found us eating pap and morogo...and then they were like, how do you cook them, how do you do this? I enjoyed it when they wanted to learn more about it. And they made me realise that it is my culture, and it is also important, and I liked the fact that someone else wanted to learn about that. (Butho) (Sibanda, 2021, p. 53)

Perhaps it reinforces our earlier discussion to suggest that during events, teachers have the opportunity to showcase their cultures through activities such as drama performances, traditional dances, and more. Furthermore, I recall one of the ladies mentioning the importance of incorporating art and culture into the classroom environment, including aspects like food and traditional attire. (Mila) (Sibanda, 2021, p. 54)

Celebrated cultural days are ideal settings to create cultural awareness and to start sharing diverse cultures. Thus, leaders could exploit them to foster integration. Ndaba explains that during the cultural heritage celebrations, immigrant educators are recognised by school leaders for displaying their cultural traditions via clothing, “The way we celebrate our heritage during the prize giving day, different cultures are showcased, involving almost everyone regardless of their culture, including educators and learners. I have seen Shona, Sepedi, Portuguese cultures... and French cultures... indicating appreciation of cultures” (Sibanda, 2021, p. 54). Sharing diverse cultures facilitates new thinking and understanding about the cultures and people themselves. This could promote a new appreciation of the school’s diversity. Therefore, advocating for integration is a necessary shift for the school’s leadership. In the spirit of respect, affirmation, and equality, assimilation of the dominant culture should not be an option for immigrant teachers. The integration provides a humane mode of acculturation, permitting the minority to embrace some elements of the majority culture while retaining their uniqueness, which is fundamental to who they are (Cox & Finley-Nickelson, 1991). In the often-divisive difference, participants illuminate possibilities of integration and positive adaptation in sharing cultural foods, the Heritage Day celebration showcasing multicultural dress codes, and “stringing together with medleys of verses of songs in different languages” (Meier & Hartell, 2009, p. 181).

According to Oya Aytemiz Seymen (2006), “integration involves some degree of heritage, culture maintenance” (p. 314). Therefore, by sharing cultural food, people can realise positive attributes about different cultures and gain new perspectives and respect for each other’s norms and values (Mashau, 2012). To affirm the equality and humanness of immigrant teachers and foster communitarianism in the school, the integration mode of acculturation is indispensable.

Leadership Accommodativeness

In the context of Critical High School, participants experience cultural diversity as division characterised by disputes, exclusion, disregard, and obliviousness to their worth in the school. Therefore, an inclusive leadership approach is pertinent to foster an awareness of immigrant educators’ cultures and respect for them. Leaders’ power of influence and persuasion can change mindsets through inclusive policy implementation and role modelling of the embracing of less dominant cultures. Such leaders must promote integration by enabling the fluidity of a developing culture that reflects the school’s diversity.

As Ndodana observes:

There are a lot of people, different backgrounds, and different cultures, so we have to allow that kind of interaction, which accommodates different cultures. People respond differently

to leadership and instruction, so one has to be flexible and allow these variations — this diversity to melt in and influence well-being. (Sibanda, 2021, p. 56)

Ndodana considers that accommodative leaders are “flexible” and adaptable in guiding the attainment of the organisation’s vision, enabling change and difference outside the established ways. With possibilities for recognising and embracing different cultures, such leaders foster respect for immigrant teachers, creating conditions for inclusivity and positive acculturation. As Jama notes, cultural diversity “encourages values such as tolerance, respect and intercultural activities” (Sibanda, 2021, p. 56). According to Mondli, the benefits of cultural integration are “inclusivity and fewer complaints ... at work” (Sibanda, 2021, p. 56).

Participants observed that sharing their unique cultural beliefs and practices creates an Ubuntu communalism of worlding together in complementary ways and affirming themselves as part of a psychologically safe space. For Cynthia, such a space enables the exploitation of one’s full potential while embracing one’s culture for well-being. It also promotes harmony in sharing social lives in a school setting. Such communalism enables embracing communities of learning that appreciate others’ unique contributions. Similarly, Manny

...believe discussing cultural diversity is inherently about discussing one’s identity. Thus, when your culture and identity are acknowledged and embraced, you experience A feeling of being welcomed. This acceptance fosters a sense of unity and connection with fellow staff members. (Sibanda, 2021, p. 57)

To create an inclusive and welcoming environment, school leaders should accommodate diverse cultures and carve some place alongside the dominant culture. They can achieve this by serving the interests of school stakeholders, mobilising varying perspectives across the board and equally valuing inputs for inclusive decision-making (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016). Accommodative leaders are indispensable in diverse school context because they embrace people’s diversity and take an invitational approach to different perspectives as grounded on varying cultures and value such contributions in an organisation, particularly problem-solving (Mazur, 2010; Meier & Hartell, 2009). Such accommodation is noted in immigrant teachers’ involvement in planning and organising cultural and prize-giving events in the school. Of significance is that accommodative leaders are cognisant of the dangers of cultural conflicts. Thus, they provide resources and opportunities for multicultural training (Sutherland & Gosling, 2010). With cultural intelligence, accommodative leaders are thoughtful towards people’s varying cultures and how these influence their conduct towards others. Therefore, they can impartially reconcile opposing perspectives.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CRITICAL LEADERSHIP

Seeking to determine immigrant teachers' acculturation in an independent school, the study acknowledges that culture is a fundamental variable of organisational behaviour. As a lens through which all stakeholders view their organisation and engage in daily work activities, it is a strong foundation with powerful influence on 'how things are done' in the organisation. In the study, the naturalised superiority of the school's dominant culture is rationalised, and immigrant teachers are not offering resistance. They are conforming to doing what the 'Romans do in Rome'. Therefore, a thoughtful response is the transformation of the school's culture. Such a transformation requires school leaders' and teachers' reflexivity to deconstruct the barriers to positive acculturation and reconstruct cultural pluralism, which will legitimise immigrant teachers' voices.

The findings illuminate immigrant teachers experiencing adverse acculturation conditions of autocratic authoritarian leadership, marginalisation and inequity, disregard, and sabotaged career progression. As reported, cultural differences produce power differentials, with immigrant teachers lower down the school's cultural hierarchy. With power as an enabler of acculturation challenges, school leaders ought to dislocate it as a possession of the host culture. Thus, the relevance of a dialectical leadership approach is to consider a fluid leadership approach, which breaks tensions by depolarising cultural differences and seeking a place for them across the table as directed by situations or needs. In this way, the adverse assimilation mode of acculturation could be repudiated.

The school's leadership is deficient in exercising the requisite consciousness to demonstrate a humane sensitivity to immigrant teachers' challenges and a moral compass to take the responsibility of protecting immigrant teachers. Therefore, the emerging tensions are not exploited as opportunities to re-think a leadership that is not culturally responsive to the needs of immigrant teachers. The senior school leadership is authoritarian, taking decisions independently and enabling inequality. For a positive acculturation process, it is incumbent upon leaders to facilitate cultural pluralism to give the minority culture's members the freedom to assimilate a few features of the majority culture "while retaining substantial differences on other dimensions" (Cox & Finley-Nickelson, 1991, p. 92). Integration is, thus, advocated as a feasible acculturation mode; it promotes positive cultural diversity exploitation, transparent and considerate communication, and inclusive decision-making (Berry, 2001). With integration, the majority and minority cultural groups are equally recognised for their value-add in achieving schools' strategic goals.

As noted, dialectical leadership sheds light on the tensions between the school's dominant host culture and the subordinate immigrant teachers' culture. And the focus is to encourage stakeholders to value both cultures and function within their continuum, where issues determine the suitability at hand. Thus, a thoughtful and negotiated process

would be possible. As conceptualised by Seyama (2018), the dimensions of dialectical leadership could facilitate insights into immigrant teachers' culture and delegitimise the related stereotypes or demeaning assumptions, confront discrimination, and affirm immigrant teachers' values that could facilitate insights into immigrant teachers' culture to contribute to the school's achievement.

Leading consciously entails leaders exploiting the interdependence between leaders, followers, the context, and the purpose of leading the school (Jones, 2012). In affirming leaders and followers' equal value-add, school leaders could intentionally stimulate open and authentic participation for immigrant teachers in deliberations and decision-making, allowing them to offer alternative thinking and cultural perspectives. Leaders embrace leading from the back, creating space for followers to lead when conditions demand their leadership (Collinson, 2018). The school's leadership could enable porous hierarchical ranks and operate within a continuum of leaders following and followers leading. The acknowledgement of all stakeholders' capabilities and each other's interdependence fosters respect, equity, and fairness. In such settings, work processes become negotiated, collaborative, cooperative, and empowering and liberating (Seyama, 2018).

Participants report an authoritarian leadership that promotes the dominant culture. Hence, there are no attempts to resist the dominant culture's oppressive strategies. However, to achieve cultural integration in a school, leaders should consider the resistance dimension of dialectical leadership. With power at their disposal, leaders can resist unfavourable strategies and practices that repress followers (Zoller & Fairhurst, 2007). As Lorri J. Santamaría and Andrés Santamaría (2016) note, "these leaders deliberately choose to withhold or set aside unearned privileges and entitlements to work alongside or on behalf of underserved communities of teachers, learners, and families" (p. 4). Moreover, they should discard the majority culture's attitudes, beliefs and values that disparage immigrant teachers' identities, languages, beliefs, and ways of being.

To promote integration as an amenable mode of acculturation, leaders leading consciously, deliberately, and with resistance pull all the resources together to support multicultural educational programmes. In this sense, people from the majority and minority cultures could share perspectives on developing multicultural insights, evaluate feasible and effective alternatives. Also adopt decisions on the reconstructed cultural elements to become a culturally plural school. All school stakeholders should develop workplace socialisation policies and practices affirming, non-discriminatory and equitable. For cultural conscientisation and the need for an integrated approach in the cosmopolitan, multicultural schools in South Africa, Saloshna Vandeyar et al. (2014) suggest that "revising in-service and pre-service teacher education may just contribute to injecting much-needed quality back into the education system of South Africa" (p. 165). In the interconnectedness of leading consciously, deliberately and with resistance, dialectical leadership could offer an approach that brightens the darker side of leadership.

The study focused on a single independent school, restricting insights into the more comprehensive immigrant teachers' acculturation experiences in various independent schools in South Africa. Thus, the study does not claim the generalisability of the findings. Considering that leadership is a relational social process among leaders and followers, future studies could consider school leaders' experiences and perspectives on the acculturation of immigrant teachers.

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