

The Complexity of Identity and Belonging: Zimbabwean Migrant Teachers in South Africa

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Abstract : Worldwide, the growth in international migration lead to an equivalent increase in worker migration, including teacher migration. In South Africa, Zimbabwean teachers represent the largest group of migrant teachers. The aim of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore difficulties and challenges that confront Zimbabwean migrant teachers in their attempt to restructure their professional and professional identities in the source country. Fifteen migrant Zimbabwean teachers in private or public high schools were involved in semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews. Purposive, convenient, quota, and snowball sampling were used to select the teachers in Gauteng province, the largest province of South Africa. The data were analysed qualitatively by using open coding. The research met the ethical guidelines for educational research, including anonymity, informed consent, confidentiality, trust, and safety in participation. Findings of the study showed that numerous interrelated issues contribute to impeding the reconstruction of the teachers' professional and personal identities. The impediments were identified as: employment status, immigration status, re-credentialing and re-certification, professional and cultural isolation, professional and cultural marginalization, and holding on to former culture or way of knowing due to lack of induction and mentoring. All these obstacles contributed to a slippery road in the restructure of their professional and personal and identities. Supporting migrant teachers to integrate into source country communities could contribute to gradually destroying the xenophobic tendencies of those institutions and communities.

Keywords : identity, impediments, cultural marginalisation, migrant teachers, South Africa

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