Curriculum Experiences Militating against the Education of Immigrant Students in a Public South African School

Charles Adedayo Adebanji

Midrand Graduate Institute, Gauteng, South Africa
Foundation and academic support Programmes unit

Mishack Thiza Gumbo

Office of Graduate Studies, University of South Africa

Abstract

This paper set out to explore curriculum experiences challenging the education of two immigrant students in a South African high school. It is a qualitative single case study following an interpretive paradigm, guided by narrative inquiry as a method. Two immigrant students, attending a public high school were interviewed in order to explore the study. Their parents were interviewed using semistructured interview technique to consolidate narratives obtained from their two immigrant children. In addition two teachers who taught them were interviewed. Data were analyzed using latent and manifest content analysis. Utilising the tenets of critical race theory and communities of practice theory to interpret the obtained data, curriculum experiences militating against their education comprised an initial struggle with the learning of English, cultural conflict, low self-esteem, acculturation and identity negotiation challenges and persistent parental unemployment.

1. Background

The prevalence of poverty and high levels of inequality in the usual countries of residence of immigrants continues to predispose South Africa to the influx of immigrants, whose aim is to better their lives (Maharaj, 2004, p.2). Their entry to South Africa seems to be accompanied by a few opportunities and numerous challenges (Adebanji, 2010). Baubock, Heller and Zolberg (1996) put across the trend of immigration to an unusual country as the starting point of challenges and opportunities. Opportunities are seen in terms of the care and nurturing accorded to refugee children because school uniforms and track suits are handed over to them on arrival at the school, sometimes with exemption from payment of school fees (Sookrajh, Gopal & Maharaj, 2005, p.6). Challenges may arise in terms of acts of racism and xenophobia unleashed at immigrants (Masuku, 2006). South Africa symbolizes a terrain of prospect for many black immigrants, but their stay may not be devoid of challenges (Crush, 2008). A number of these challenges comprise issues cutting across the curriculum, categorised into presented, enacted, assessed and hidden curriculum experiences (Kurz, Elliot, Wehby & Smithson, 2010; Langhout & Mitchell, 2008).

The resultant effects of immigration include stripping of their home language, culture and identities. Immigrant children are predisposed to conforming to the prevailing language, cultures, and negotiating their identities with the host country (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2000). There has been an increase in the number of black immigrant children who attend South African public schools because they came into South Africa with their parents. However, it is important to state that when children of immigrants begin to attend schools, they may face stress factors because typical school environments "are not culturally neutral or value-neutral arenas but rather reflect the dissonances of the wider society" (Goddard & Foster, 2002, p.4), South Africa being one of such. Similarly at the home front there are issues that challenge the morale of children towards becoming educated (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1994; O'Hare & Mather, 2003), which may be classified as hidden curriculum experiences. Consequently immigrant students' experiences fall directly under the presented and hidden curriculum issues.

Immigrant children from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are among the famous immigrant groups who attend South African public schools due to the war situation in their home country, economic instability and also because of their search for better living condition to make them suitable for upward class mobility in a globalized world. Since DRC immigrants come from a French-speaking and a different cultural milieu to South Africa with the recognition of eleven official languages (Pandor, 2006), it is speculated that certain curriculum experiences may be vital to unravel as

important factors capable of militating against their educational path. One such significant challenge may originate from their parents whose aim may be to advance their educational attainment. The concerns of immigrant parents elsewhere have been reported to be heard when their children were being marginalized (Wang & Phillion, 2007).

Since the arrival of democracy in South Africa, there has been very little research on the curriculum experiences militating against the education of immigrant students in a typical public South African school. This study is important because it attempts to offer a perspective of what immigrant students negotiate in an attempt to become educated. To this end we sought answers to the following research questions: What are the curriculum experiences militating against immigrant students in a typical public South African school? How do curriculum experiences impact on the education of immigrant children in a typical public South African school? We begin this case by exploring the available literature to unravel the dynamics at work in a typical immigrant family and at the school. We proceed by deconstructing the overarching issues unfolding from the theoretical frameworks employed. The research strategy that summarizes the meta-theoretical and procedural standpoint of this study is afterward offered. This is trailed by presenting the evolving themes from the transcribed data. We wrap up with conclusion and recommendations, after discussing the findings using issues raised in the voluminous literature and the theoretical frameworks of the study.

2. Scholarship Review

The influx of immigrants to a novel society is usually taken to imply involvement in many societal institutions with examples ranging from cultural, economic and political involvement (Driessen & Smit, 2007). A prominent aspect of consideration borders on the plight of immigrants to secure employment to sustain their families. The case of South Africa seems to be a unique one since independence in 1994 due to the way immigrants are discriminated against, being a highly xenophobic society (Doodson, 2002) with entrenched hostility (Danso & McDonald, 2000). This mindset is envisaged to directly affect the survival of immigrants and their children in their newly found environment of sojourn. This state of affairs suggests a need to explore issues cutting across the curriculum in relation to the recipients of the curriculum (immigrant students). At times we deal with issues involving underachievement among immigrant children in superficial manner. Undoubtedly there are certain underlying factors which tend to militate against their achievement profile, not only at school but at home. We refer to such issues as presented and hidden curriculum experiences. Our conceptualization is premised on the notion that home front issues are capable of impacting on the education of immigrant students when they are presented with the curriculum at school. Presented curriculum experiences depict a specified programme of study, aimed at navigating the educational path of students (Davis, 1994). We also adopt Wenger's (1998) conceptualization that the curriculum is the mode of operation, aimed-at for learning to evolve in a community of practice.

Drawing on Wenger's (1998. p.108) scholarship, the family setup is conceptualised as comprising subsets of communities of practice capable of contributing to the academic development of children. For example when children are assisted with their homework by parents and guardians, they are being prepared to take strides to attain academic achievement which support the effort rendered by educators at the school level. However what operates within the family setup and immediate environment are capable of determining their achievement profile. According to a study conducted in the United States of America, it was revealed that children residing in poorly developed environments underperform on an assortment of developmental outcomes compared with their counterparts living in more advanced communities (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan & Aber, 1997; Jencks & Mayer, 1990). It implies that ambiance and the economic status of parents may affect the capacity of children to focus on learning.

Furthermore the challenges confronting immigrants surface in terms of acculturation unease in our dispensation that has been battered by insecurity and which also takes cognizance of category of the populace. Acculturative stress may evolve from an inability of immigrant parents securing jobs in a novel society. Unemployment incapacitates the ability of people to adjust properly to another culture, drawing on the scholarship of Madhavappallil and Choi (2006). Acculturation connotes how humans reconcile in the midst of cultural diversities with the intuition that there are hierarchies in terms of the affiliation to one or more cultures than the others. Language in intricately linked to acculturation because it is the means of communicating between different cultures (Yeh et al., 2008). The language of communication at home is important if immigrant students are to excel academically. Language could be viewed as constituting communities of practice at home and at school, drawing on the scholarship of Wenger (1998, p.108). It implies when parents communicate in English at home, they are consolidating the capacity of their children to partake in the different communities of practice at school, for effective learning to evolve. At the school the ease with which immigrant students interact with peers is indicative of their capacity to blend with stakeholders to learn English. Acts of

discrimination against immigrant students at the school by their peers inhibits the ease of acculturation. In the mainstream society, linguistic issues are not always comprehensible by immigrant cohorts because "language is not just a cultural issue but a political one" (Wang & Phillion 2007, p.95). Therefore it implies that the cultural value of language recedes to a political pedestal once indigenous students deliberately use the local languages to converse in an attempt to exclude immigrant students from their communities of practice. Therefore the incompetence of immigrant groups to converse in the novel culture may culminate in discriminatory actions against them at school (Osborn & Osborn, 2005).

Brown, Miller and Mitchell (2006, p.150) posit, where reading ability levels are high and years of schooling are commensurate with consecutive age, many immigrant and refugee students may find the "mainstream curriculum and its language demands very difficult." Consequently immigrants students may have feelings of not being fulfilled, diminished recognition, and uncommunicativeness (Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004; Noguera & Wing, 2006). Issues bordering on feelings of not being fulfilled, diminished recognition and uncommunicativeness are capable of deterring the possibility of immigrant students interacting in communities of practice comprising stakeholders (teachers and peers). When there is uncommunicativeness among stakeholders in communities of practice learning may be hampered (Wenger, 1998). This suggests that the environment where immigrant students are found may be viewed as a learning curriculum with formal and informal stipulations, aimed at either militating against their survival or assisting their adjustment to it. This conceptualization is based on Lave's (1997) scholarship of a learning curriculum. Therefore the learning curriculum may be perceived as an arrangement of tenets existing in realms of influence such as the home and school fronts. Therefore the learning curriculum is an amalgamation of the presented and hidden curriculum experiences traversed by immigrant students. The implication of this discourse seems to mean that learning:

> is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming— to become a certain person or, conversely to avoid becoming a certain person. It is the information of an identity that learning can become a source of meaningfulness and of personal and social energy (Wenger, 1998, p.122).

The adjustment of immigrant students to the mainstream society is therefore dependent on a number of dynamics such as discrimination, harassment, isolation, linguistic barriers, cultural transition, social adjustment, school setting, sense of belonging, and identity mediation. Based on the ideologies in the voluminous literature we speculate that the adjustment of immigrant students to the mainstream society and school setting depend on intricate issues of the presented and hidden curriculum experiences.

3. Theoretical Resonance

Based on the above deliberations about immigrant students, this study is immersed within Critical Race Theory (CRT) and communities of practice framework (CoP) (Wenger, 1998).

3.1 Critical Race Theory (CRT)

According to the tenets of CRT, any evident form of discrimination, xenophobia and injustice can be evaluated to decipher inequality and injustice (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado & Crenshaw, 1993, p.6). CRT is a vital tool that exposes, confronts and attempts to elucidate our understanding of black immigrants in South Africa by allowing the voices of the marginalized to be heard as suggested by Matsuda (1995). CRT can be used as a tool for exposing, analyzing and challenging issues pertaining to majoritarianism. Therefore the right to be heard is important in CRT because those who have experienced discrimination speak with a special voice which should be listened to (Matsuda, 1995, p.63). Consequently CRT is used in this study to expose acts of racial discrimination and xenophobia as regards immigrant parents and the effects such acts may have on their children, and claims of maintaining neutrality and acceptance of other races. Inasmuch as immigrant parents have legal status in South Africa, there should not arise any instance that they would be endlessly marginalized and discriminated against in all facets of life. In view of the notion that CRT identifies racism as endemic in society, by insisting on historical and contextual analyses in order to place value on the voices of people (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p.48), this study uses the narratives from the immigrant parents and their children as raw materials for exposing and analysing the presence and prevalence of racism within the South African community.

3.2 Communities of practice (CoP)

Communities of Practice comprise groups of individuals who share a concern or a craving for what they do and who work together frequently to gain expertise (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) insists that communities of practice are individuals intimately connected together by common knowledge and a desire for mutual enterprise. We employ the scholastic reiteration of Wenger by stipulating that at the home front there are communities of practice comprising parents and children, working together for the common good of the family. When parents are gainfully employed their children would benefit by being catered to, in terms of payment of fees. This is speculated to be capable of giving the immigrant children the necessary sense of belonging to engage in scholarly activities at home and at school. In the CoP framework practice is a collective inventory of capitals: involvements, apparatuses, and methods of confronting cyclical challenges (Wenger, 1998). The emblem of practice by parents and children at home entails that parents provide for their children by paying fees, while the children demonstrate academic learning by excelling in their studies. At the school level the involvement of teachers with students signifies practice as they co-construct knowledge.

The opportunity given to parents to work is synergistic because children would benefit in the long run as their parents pay fees. Consequently the South African community is a representation of a larger community of practice, driving the smooth running of activities in a country through practice at the different subsets of communities of practice. Each member is regarded as a practitioner (Wenger, 1998). The availability of capital to immigrant parents is a hidden curriculum issue capable of impacting on the presented curriculum issues among their immigrant children. The involvement of parents in the place of work depicts the tenets of the workplace curriculum as suggested by Billett (2006). Therefore when parents are employed, they are seen under the CoP lens as cooperating with their children to fulfil their mission in academic communities of practice at the school front, drawing on Otten (2009). Therefore our speculation suggests that communities of practice are a conglomerate of the presented and hidden curriculum dynamics capable of impacting on the education of immigrant students.

In the CoP framework, members are seen as capable of "crossing boundaries" to other groups of intertwined CoP with time and space (Wenger, 1998, p.126-133). The idea of members shifting positions otherwise referred to by Wenger as "crossing boundaries" is intellectualized in this study to imply the movement of immigrant students from one facility/department to another in pursuance of a particular concern. It is thus envisioned that participation, as responsible members of the CoP is incumbent on the stakeholders. The CoP framework predisposes this study to exploring the effects that may ensue from the immigrant students' encounters with teachers, parents, South African students and students from other African countries as they cross one another's boundaries. This study therefore perceives the mainstream society as being a bigger community of practice, with subsets of other little communities of practice (e.g. the involvement of immigrant students with parents, teachers, peers etc.). Therefore we visualize the scholastic contributions of teachers, involvement of parents and learning of English, to mention but a few, as subsets of a bigger CoP.

4. Research Strategy

This study followed a qualitative research approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Within this approach an interpretive paradigm which engages a constructive pathway was chosen (Pouliot, 2007) as it suited the design. Interpretivism claims that humans always negotiate and give meaning to the dynamics of their world. Consequently, interpretivists assert that the world is fabricated by humans, making it to be dissimilar from the natural world (Williamson, 2002). The interpretivist paradigm supports naturalistic inquiry with the research conducted in its natural setting, employing an inductive style of reasoning and giving emphasis to qualitative data (Williamson, 2006, p.84). The methodological approach entailed narrative inquiry (Welikala, 2007) and a single case study (Yin, 2003) to explore the curriculum experiences militating against the education of immigrant students in a South African schooling perspective. Two high school girls from the same family were interviewed to offer a microcosmic perspective of curriculum experiences negotiated by immigrant students in a dissimilar culture. The selection of the two female immigrant students attending a high school in the Gauteng province paved the way to reach their parents who willingly agreed to be interviewed. The family had one boy and four girls. One girl was in Grade 10 and the other in Grade 12.

Data gathering methods included semistructured interviews with the two immigrant daughters, their parents who indicated keen interest in participating in the study, two teachers who taught them, observation of the family makeup and field notes. The interviews lasted up to two hours. All the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim to provide a means of analysis. The observation of the scenery of the apartment where the family lived was conducted with a video recorder while the interview sessions were being conducted. This gave this study an advantage to critically observe the natural setting of the home and the neighbourhood. The obtained data were analyzed using both latent and manifest content analysis methods (Kondracki, Wellman & Amundson, 2002). The interview transcripts, observation and field

notes constituted the units of analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Manifest content analysis involved a consideration of what the text conveyed as meaning. It presented a description of the vivid and understandable components of the text (Kondracki et al., 2002). The latent content analysis method elucidated an investigation of the communicated meaning of the obtained text. This was done through inferences drawn from the characteristics of connections and associations involving the underlying meaning of the text and unuttered prompts. Examples included silences, frowns, and exhilarations, to mention but a few (Kondracki et al., 2002). Codes which are defined as instruments to think with, and heuristic devises were assigned to the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.32). Codes were assigned to the specific aspects of the transcribed data that appeared to have provided answers to part or the entire research questions (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Continuous perusal of obtained data presented the opportunity to add to previously coded data as more and more categories and themes emerged (Creswell, 2007).

5. Findings

The themes that emerged from the study included economic status and acts of racism, linguistic challenges and parental expectations, cultural conflict, attachment to ethnic origin, identity and acculturation struggle. We refer to the parents as Mr. and Mrs. Samson, and their children as Cynthia and Erika. The two teachers are referred to as Ms. Brown and Ms. Gumede.

5.1 Economic status and acts of racism

Based on our argument that the family setup comprises communities of practice with roles and responsibilities, the economic status of the family was explored. In response to our question Mr. Samson's employment status was revealed in this vignette:

> *Researcher: Are you employed in South Africa?*
> *Mr. Samson: No, I'm not working. I was working in Durban with an Indian guy. He was just paying me pea-nuts. How could I survive with my family on meager income?*
> *Mrs. Samson: I am not working, it is difficult to get menial jobs here as a foreigner. We are just here.*

Mr. and Mrs. Samson expressed their desire to give their children good education but could not afford to do so because of their employment status. They had to book appointments with the school principal on strategies to pay school fees so that their children would not be sent out of school. Mr. Samson spoke on behalf of his wife:

> *Researcher: How have you been paying your children's fees?*
> *Mr. Samson: We always go to see their principal so that we can discuss how we would pay as we get funds.*

Specifically, Mr. Samson narrated his experience which seemed discriminatory when viewed under the CRT lens. He made a number of attempts to get a job but could not. Evidence is provided:

> *Researcher: All these years did you not make attempts to get a job?*
> *Mr. Samson: I went for an interview at the BMW, the interview was successful, but they asked me for my ID. At that time, as a refugee, we had a red ID, and that red ID was not yet issued, but I've got all the receipts. Instead, they wanted the green South African ID. So, I was not given the job as a mechanic.*
> *Mrs. Samson: The same applies to my case as a woman. The average South African woman struggles to get a job. Would a foreigner be given a job instead?*

The two teachers who taught the immigrant children supported the employment status of immigrant parents when they were asked to divulge the reason behind the influx of immigrant students to the school. According to Ms. Brown, *"The parents of immigrant children are mostly unemployed. This is a challenge in terms of their inability to pay fees."* This statement was supported by Ms. Gumede who said, *"Parents of immigrant children are incapable of paying fees, and this makes the school to have a high turnover of teachers because the school governing body cannot pay teachers as at when due."* Ms. Gumede reiterated, *"We cannot prevent them from attending classes because this is a public school, they have the right to be educated at this level."*

Cynthia and Erika were not doing well academically as seen in this session:

Researcher: Can you say that you are coping academically?

Cynthia: I wish my parents could afford to pay our fees as at when due. This affects my concentration at school because when other children are listening in class, I am distracted each time I remember that we are here, managing and not living as we should.

Erika: One thing we all fail to realize is that a child's self-esteem is low when parents are incapable of paying fees. I am depressed each day I go to school because of the financial situation at home. If we were in the DRC I am sure we would not be treated the way we are being treated here. Our parents have tried to be employed but to no avail in 10 years.

5.2 Linguistic challenges and parental encouragement

Linguistic challenge constitutes one of the issues confronting French-speaking immigrant students. It usually becomes an impediment to academic achievement and interaction with peers on arrival to the school. Mrs. Samson narrated the constraints that they faced in this regard:

Researcher: Can you tell us the experience of your daughters when they arrived in South Africa?

Mrs. Samson: It was not so easy for the children to come to South Africa at the same time, especially. We came from a French-speaking country. And when they came, we didn't know English. When they go to school they teach them in English, father, mother, children, they don't know English.

Mr. Samson: When they brought homework to us, we could not help, but after some time they could learn and understand English quickly. We knew this when they began to correct our English. When we first came, they failed their examinations because they could not understand English.

Utilising the CoP framework it implies that at the home front the entire family operated under dysfunctional communities of practice because of linguistic challenge. Parents could not assist children with their homework. After a short while, the children began to understand English even better than their parents. Although Mr. and Mrs. Samson and their children initially operated under dysfunctional communities of practice as far as linguistic adjustment was concerned. They operated in functional communities of practice as far as upholding moral values was concerned. The immigrant parents had a tradition of encouraging their children to be focused in order to gain upward class mobility despite the challenges confronting them:

Researcher: Do you have cultural values that you impart to your children?

Mr. Samson: As a parent, I encourage my children by telling them not to look at other children who are not focused. They must forget about the problems they see today so that they can achieve their goals in order to have open doors and opportunities.

Cynthia and Erika expressed their commitment, not to engage in immoral practices that seemed prevalent in other students. They belonged and participated in communities of practice that kept them focused despite challenges confronting them at home:

Researcher: Can you tell us your philosophy despite your challenges in South Africa and at this school?

Cynthia: I have made up my mind not to have boyfriends because we have been taught the importance of hard work and focus in our family. As a matter of fact, I don't date at all because it is misleading.

Erika: I follow my sister's philosophy so as to keep hoping for the best.

5.3 Cultural conflict

Adherence to the strong DRC culture was one of the manifestations observed in the immigrant family, contrary to what was in operation in the mainstream society. The tenets of the Bible as guiding principles were strictly followed by the family, disparate from what was available to Cynthia and Erika in the mainstream society. Mr. Samson had this to say on his concerns:

Researcher: Can you please tell us what your culture entails in comparison to the South African culture?

Mr. Samson: In our culture, we live according to the Bible. My children must honour and respect father and mother and the children must respect themselves. A child cannot see the nudity of her mother, but here in South Africa, it is not so. We make sure our children observe the DRC culture, even if they are outside the home. How do we ensure that our children are morally inclined as they go to school? This is a real challenge to us.

E-ISSN 2039-2117
ISSN 2039-9340

Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences
MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy

Vol 5 No 1
January 2014

Cynthia mentioned disrespect towards teachers by South African students at her school as one of the issues that irritated her most:

> *Researcher: Is there any difference between what you have been taught at home and what you see in other children at this school?*
> *Cynthia: Here at the school, they don't respect teachers. At home, we have been taught to respect our teachers and to take them as our own parents. When I see disrespect, my heart bleeds for our teachers who cannot even discipline them because corporal punishment has been banned.*

The communities of practice at the home front clashed with other communities of practice comprising ill-discipline, exhibited by other students in terms of disrespect to teachers – an indication of cultural conflict.

5.4 Attachment to the ethnic origin: evidence of non-assimilation

Mr. & Mrs. Samson nursed the desire to return to the DRC, an indication of non-integration to the South African society after ten years of sojourn! Cynthia and Erika were also attached to the DRC culture. Their communities of practice repelled the mainstream communities of practice because of acts of racism, such that they could not reach an agreement:

> *Researcher: After 10 years of stay in South Africa would you return to the DRC?*
> *Mrs. Samson: Home is home, but because of their studies you know? They already started to learn English, you know, if we go back home now, they will struggle again to learn in French. That is why we prefer them to finish school here. Then, we can go. If they want to stay, they can stay; but we'll go back home.*
> *Mr. Samson: We cannot stay here, it's like we have wasted 10 years of our lives.*
> *Cynthia: We cannot continue to stay in this country because South Africans are hostile.*
> *Erika: Our stay has proved that foreigners are not welcome, so we would return to our country.*

5.5 Identity and acculturation struggles

Of interest to us was how the immigrant parents and their children described their identity after more than ten years of sojourn in South Africa:

> *Researcher: How would you describe your identity now?*
> *Mr. Samson: No, no, no, you know some people are making a mistake. I cannot be a South African? I can work in South Africa if I get a job. I can help this nation the way I can, but I cannot change my identity to be a South African. It means I am going to fail what I am doing.*
> *Cynthia: I am a Congolese, and I prefer to remain a Congolese. The South African culture is unacceptable to me, so I choose where I come from, even though I don't remember much of how things are done in the DRC but my mother tells me of the culture and the dressing. She even shows me a video of the traditions of DRC.*
> *Erika: It is not possible for me to become a South African. What for?*
> *Researcher: Why don't you want to become a South African?*
> *Mr. Samson: There is nothing you can do in this country, no one can appreciate it. Let's say this, for 12 years; we got our ID's last year, for 12 years. Our time has been wasted since we got here. No regular jobs, we can't send our children to the school we desire, we are sharing an apartment with other families, no privacy.*

6. Discussion

Using the CRT lens to evaluate the ordeals of the immigrant students in this study predisposes us to argue that Cynthia and Erika were marginalized by their society of sojourn to some extent because their parents were unemployed. Perpetual marginalization, a symbol of hidden curriculum experience, disenfranchised them from actively participating in academic communities of practice at the school. A brief analysis of CRT involves our understanding that recognition should be ascribed to the experiential knowledge and capacity of humans, based on human justice and policies and not purely on their foreignness, drawing on Matsuda et al. (1993:6). The story of Mr. Samson shows that his experiential knowledge was truncated by what we refer to as "*a new emergence of apartheid after the abolition of White-to-Black apartheid*". We juxtapose the CoP and CRT frameworks by affirming that unemployment chased the parents of Cynthia and Erika to become dysfunctional in their home front communities of practice. Therefore acts of racism and xenophobia in the South African society (a bigger CoP) became instrumental to their becoming dysfunctional in their roles and

responsibilities.

As suggested by Wenger (1998, p.108) that there are subsets of communities of practice working for the common good of a bigger CoP, the immigrant parents were incapacitated by being perpetually unemployed. On the part of Erika and Cynthia the ripple effects of unemployment, which manifested in their home front communities of practice, became a hidden curriculum experience to them. The communities of practice at the home front became disenfranchised, and this was directly felt by their daughters attending the public South African high school. This experience likely predisposed Cynthia and Erika to having low self-esteem. Consequently they had a low sense of belonging to the communities of practice at school. As resounded by one of the girls, she was carried away by the challenge at home when in class, instead of participating in scholarly activities with the communities of practice at the school front. We argue that the education of immigrant children in the unusual society may be dependent on the wellness of communities of practice at the home front for learning to evolve at school. It seems obvious, according to Matsuda et al. (1993, p.6) that the South African community laws place immigrants and refugees at a disadvantage, while indigenous South Africans are irrevocably placed at an advantage whether they have the wherewithal to advance the socio-economic frontiers of South Africa or not. To answer the question: What are the curriculum experiences militating against the education of immigrant students? We argue that a blend of racism, discrimination and xenophobia from the larger communities of practice (South African environment) were hidden curriculum experiences which militated against the education of immigrant students from the DRC.

The issue of linguistic adjustment was an intended curriculum experience of the immigrant children in this study. They could not speak a word in English when they newly came to South Africa. They began to improve as they participated in communities of practice comprising their peers and teachers. A notable point entails knowing that their learning of English took place over a long period of interaction with other communities of practice at the school. At home their parents could not interact with them because they spoke French. Initially at the home front, there were dysfunctional communities of practice which could not ignite their effort to learn English. Familial influence seemed to have slowed down the immigrant children's bid to learn and speak English until they began to cross boundaries to other CoP. The notion of "crossing boundaries" to other groups of intertwined CoP with time and space, drawing on Wenger (1998, p.126-133) was likely responsible for their learning of English at school. The idea of immigrant students shifting positions implies their movement from one community of practice to another in pursuance of a particular concern (to learn English). Their experience concurs with Wenger's (1998, p.126-133) idea that members of communities of practice may have to cross from one boundary of practice to the other for learning to evolve. Consequently a hidden curriculum experience of the immigrant students was that they negotiated their learning of English by belonging and participating in academic communities of practice.

However despite that the capacity to communicate is crucial to the adjustment process of immigrants in the society of sojourn, they had acculturative stress, a situation which made acculturation to the society of settlement a challenging one. This could be attributed to the story of immigration which they endlessly reflected upon, and the challenges that were experienced in South Africa. It thus seems that despite the ability to communicate in the society of sojourn, acculturation and negotiation of identities may be truncated due to an assortment of experiences in the mainstream culture, a scenario which supports the notion of Kohn (2002). The ability to interact with the mainstream culture appears not to be a unilateral factor in the adjustment of immigrants to the society of sojourn. We argue that the immigrant students of this study had a hidden curriculum experience which entailed acculturative stress and an inability to identify with the South African society despite that they had lived for more than 10 years in South Africa.

The immigrant students experienced a hidden curriculum experience which we refer to as cultural conflict, a phenomenon which reminded them of their foreignness. They vacillated between two dissimilar cultures which attempted to challenge their home culture. Utilising the CoP framework, they stayed connected to home front CoP, rendering the mainstream cultural tenets, which infiltrated into the school dysfunctional. This learning was heightened by virtue of the tutelage by the home front CoP until the desired learning of cultural tenets evolved. An array of the unfavorable experiences negotiated by the immigrant parents in South Africa seemed to have informed their strong attachment to the Congolese culture. The same was indicated in the response of their daughters when they defined their identities as "*Congolese*". Their experiences seem to agree with the notion that "identity is all about choice, action and a multiplicity of experience and allegiance" (Kohn, 2002, p.155). Cynthia and Erika chose not to identify with the South African culture, a decision taken based on response to ways they were treated by the South African environment. They maintained their strong Congolese identity as a result of the hegemonic forces prevalent in South Africa. It thus seems that the issue of delayed negotiation of identities among immigrants and refugees in South Africa could be attributed to their stance of continued deprivation, racism and intolerance which they continued to experience. The same argument seems to tally

with their inability to acculturate to the host society because:

> *Acculturation is not only a time to learn new norms and values, and to adopt salient reference groups of the host society, but is a process that includes the ability to grow beyond the original culture and encompass a new culture (Yeh et al., 2008:784).*

Cynthia and Erika could not outgrow their original cultural disposition to encapsulate the South African culture, although they began to learn new tenets and principles in academic communities of practice. Acts of racism, xenophobia and discrimination hindered their acculturative processes, a transferred effect from the larger communities of practice (South African society). Another aspect of cultural conflict experienced by the immigrant students at school was disrespect to teachers. This was different from what they knew in their home front CoP. Disrespect to teachers was a hidden curriculum experience to them because it contravened their usual ways of interacting with experts in CoP. Disrespect to teachers by indigenous students was a reflection of the position of the South African society, especially because corporal punishment has been abolished. Disrespect to teachers by South African students seems to resound the argument of Goddard and Foster (2002, p.4) that typical school environments "are not culturally neutral or value-neutral arenas but rather reflect the dissonances of the wider society."

7. Conclusion

South Africa continues to see the incursion of foreigners as a threat after almost 20 years of liberation from apartheid. This predisposes authorities to having a philosophy that rejects foreigners no matter how skilled they may be. CRT is vivid in terms of defining such practices as unhealthy for the continuity of a nation that depicts such acts. The experiences of Cynthia and Erika are a reflection of the ills of racism and how it limits the potential of those concerned. The CoP framework implies that it is important for the different communities of practice to work effectively as subsets of a bigger community of practice so that the education of immigrant students may be fostered without interruption. The contribution of parents at the home front depends on their capacity to become employed in the bigger community of practice. When they are employed, their immigrant children benefit directly. They would be afforded the opportunity to focus on their study as they demonstrate the acquisition of the necessary self-esteem to focus on their studies. As this chain is maintained the immigrant children would be equipped with the knack to participate in academic communities of practice at the school front. Consequently it becomes vital to see communities of practice as a chain of events intricately linked to one another. Once there is a break in transmission of roles and responsibilities, the different subsets of communities of practice become dysfunctional. In the final analysis, CRT has divulged that individual and organizational racism is entrenched and established in the fabrics of the South African society, spreading its grip to the political, economic and social echelons of its society.

8. Recommendation

We recommend that South Africa should examine the factors that advanced the economies of countries that have high influx of immigrants, so as to take the right decisions that would advance the frontiers of the South African economy. Up till now the United States of America is admitting immigrants to its economy. The reason is that immigrants are capable of contributing to the development of any economy, given the opportunity to have access to quality education. Truncating the efforts of immigrant parents is tantamount to jeopardizing the contributions they are capable of making to the bigger CoP (South African economy). Similarly South Africa should be seen by authorities as a bigger slice of communities of practice laden with the responsibility to ascertain that individual immigrant families fulfil their roles and responsibilities to the nation and to their families. We are not saying that immigrants should be offered employment at the expense of South Africans. However where there is scarcity of skills immigrants who have such skills should be engaged so that the larger communities of practice may continue to function in perpetuity.

References

Baubock, R., Heller, A., & Zolberg, A. (Eds.) (1996). The challenge of diversity: Integration and pluralism in societies of immigration. Aldershot: Avebury.
Brooks-Gunn, J., Duncan, G. J., & Maritato, N. (1997). Poor families, poor outcomes: The wellbeing of children and youth. In G.D. J. Brooks-Gunn (Ed.), Consequences of growing up poor (pp. 1–17). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Brown, J., Miller, J., & Mitchell, J. (2006). Integrated schooling and the acquisition of literacy: Experiences of Sudanese refugees in Victorian secondary schools. Australian journal of language and literacy, 29(2), 150-162.

Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies. New Delhi: Sage Publications Inc.

Creswell, W. J. (2007). Educational research planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (3rd ed.). New Jersey, USA: Pearson Education International.

Crush, J. (2008). South Africa: Policy in the face of xenophobia. Southern African migration project (SAMP). Unpublished.

Danso, R., & McDonald, D. A. (2000). Writing xenophobia: Immigration and the press in post-apartheid South Africa. SAMP Migration Policy Series Paper No. 17.

Davis, J. (1994). The university curriculum and the transition in South Africa. European journal of education, 29(3), 255-268.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, N. S. (2005). Paradigms and perspectives in contention (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (Eds.) (2006). Critical Race Theory in education: All God's children got a song. New York: Routledge.

Doodson, B. (2002). "Gender and the brain drain". SAMP Migration Policy Series No. 23. Cape Town: SAMP.

Driessen, G., & Smit, F. (2007). Effects of immigrant parents' participation in society on their children's school performance. Acta Sociologica, 50(1), 39-45.

Duncan, G. J., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Klebanov, P. K. (1994). Economic deprivation and early-childhood development. Child Development, 65, 296–318.

Goddard, J. T., & Foster, R. Y. (2002). Adapting to diversity: Where cultures collide - Educational issues in Northern Alberta. Canadian Journal of Education, 27(1), 1-20.

Gibson, M.A., Gandara, P., & Koyama, J.P. (2004). School connections: U.S. Mexican youth, peers and school achievement. Teachers College Press.

Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: Concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. Nurse Education Today, 24, 105-112.

Jencks, C., & Mayer, S. (1990). The social consequences of growing up in a poor neighbourhood. In L. Lynn & M. McGeary (Eds.), Inner-city poverty in the United States (pp. 111–186). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Kohn, T. (2002). Becoming an islander through action in the Scottish Hebrides. Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.) 8, 143-158.

Kondracki, N. L., Wellman, N. S., & Amundson, D. R. (2002). Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education. Journal of Nutrition Education and Behaviour, 34(4), 224-230.

Kurz, A., Elliot, S.N., Wehby, J.H., & Smithson, J.L. (2010). Alignment of the intended, planned, and enacted curriculum in general and special education and its relation to student achievement. The journal of special education, 44(3), 131-145.

Langhout, R. D., & Mitchell, C. A. (2008). Engaging Contexts: Drawing the Link between Student and Teacher Experiences of the Hidden Curriculum. Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 18, 593–614.

Li, J. (2001). Expectations of Chinese immigrant parents for their children's education: The interplay of Chinese tradition and the Canadian context. Canadian Journal of Education, 26(4), 477-494.

Madhavappallil, T., & Choi, J. B. (2006). Acculturative stress and social support among Korean and Indian immigrant adolescents in the United States. Journal of Sociology and social welfare, 33(2), 123-143.

Maharaj, B. (2004). Global migration perspectives: Immigration to post-apartheid South Africa. Global Commission on International Migration, 1, 1-27.

Masuku, T. (2006). "Targetting foreigners: Xenophobia among Johannesburg police." Institute for security studies. Crime Quarterly, 15. Retrieved 8 October, 2008

Matsuda, M. (1995). Looking to the bottom: Critical legal studies and reparations. In K. Crenshaw, Kimberle, (eds.), Critical Race Theory (pp. 63-79). New York: New Press.

Matsuda, M., Lawrence, C., Delgado, R., & Crenshaw, K. (Eds) (1993). Words that wound: Critical Race Theory, assaultive speech and the first amendment. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Noguera, P.A., & Wing, J.Y. (2006). Unfinished Business: Closing the racial achievement Gaps in our schools. San Francisco: Josey Boss.

O'Hare, W., & Mather, M. (2003, October). The growing number of kids in severely distressed neighborhoods: Evidence from the 2000 Census.
    Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Population Reference Bureau. Osborne, J. W.

Osborn, T. A., & Osborn, D. C. (2005). Introduction: Participating in democracy means participating in schools. In T.A. Osborn (ed.). Language and cultural diversity in U.S. schools: Democratic principles in action, 1-4. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Otten, M. (2009). Academicus Interculturalis? Negotiating interculturality in academic communities of practice. Intercultural Education, 20(5), 407-417.

Pandor, N. (2006). Language issues and challenges: Opening address at the Language Policy Implementation in HEIs Conference, Pretoria. Retrieved October 5, 2010 from
    www.education.gov.za/dynamic/dynamic.aspx?pageid=306&id=2290.

Pouliot, V. (2007). "Sobjectivism". Towards a constructivist methodology. International studies quarterly, 51(2), 359-384.

Sookrajh, R., Gopal, N., & Maharaj, B. (2005). Interrogating inclusionary and exclusionary practices: Learners of war and flight. Perspectives in Education, 23(1), 1-14.

Suárez-Orozco, M., & Suárez-Orozco, C. (2000). Some conceptual considerations in the interdisciplinary study of immigrant children. In E. T. Trueba & L. I. Bartolome (Eds.), Immigrant voices: In search of educational equity (pp. 17–36). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Wang, Y., & Phillion, J. (2007). Chinese American students fight for their rights. Educational Foundations, 91-105.

Welikala, T. (2007). Flirting with the boundaries: Artistic spaces, social science spaces and narrative inquiry. The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities, 33, 131-148.

Williamson, K. (2002). Research methods for students, academics and professionals: Information management and systems (2nd ed.). Wagga Wagga, NSW: Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University.

Williamson, K. (2006). Research in constructivist frameworks using ethnographic techniques. Library Trends, 55(1), 83-101.

Xu, S., Connenelly, F., He, M., Fang, M., & Joann, P. (2007). Immigrant students' experience of schooling: A narrative inquiry theoretical framework. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 39(4), 399-422.

Yeh, C. J., Okubo, Y., Ma, P. W., Shea, M., Ou, D., & Pituc, S. T. (2008). Chinese immigrant high school students' cultural interactions, acculturation, family obligations, language use, and social support. Adolescence, 43(172) 775-790.

Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research: Design and methods (3rd ed.). California: Sage Publications.