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Immigrant Teachers In Singapore Schools: Backgrounds, Integration, and Diversification

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Abstract

Immigrant-background teachers make up a fragment of the teacher population in mainstream Singapore schools. Though modest in terms of number, the presence of these teachers in the Singapore teaching workforce is arguably significant in other ways. To date, little research attention has been paid to this unique group of teachers. Based on a Ministry of Education-National Institute of Education (MOE-NIE) funded study (OER 16/17 YPD), this article provides an overview of the characteristics and experiences of immigrant teachers in mainstream Singapore primary and secondary schools, with a focus on the practical challenges and value tensions they encounter in the professional settings. Findings show that immigrant teachers are generally well integrated into the Singapore education system notwithstanding certain challenges. Meanwhile, some teachers' experiences of negotiating with value differences suggest that immigrant teachers may have the potential to add diversity to the education system, although this potential appears to be limited by the pragmatic imperative of professional integration.

Introduction

The realities of immigration and an increasingly diversifying society are significant concerns in Singapore's national education, evinced through the

considerable attention given to topics and themes related to immigration and diversity in the Social Studies (SS) and Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) syllabi. However, the spotlight on wider societal concerns pertaining to immigration and diversity is rarely directed towards Singapore's education system itself. One way in which immigrant diversity manifests in the education system is through the presence of teachers of migrant backgrounds, or 'immigrant teachers'.

According to a *Straits Times* news article in 2011 (Ng, 2011), there were less than 620 'international teachers' in Singapore schools, accounting for less than 2% of the then 31,000-strong teaching workforce. Since then, no updated figure on immigrant teachers in Singapore schools appeared to have been made publicly available, although the number as well as proportion to the entire teaching workforce are likely to have remained at a low level.

Though modest in number, having immigrant teachers in the Singapore teaching workforce is arguably significant in other ways. These teachers hail from life/career trajectories that differ significantly from teachers who are locally born-and-bred, which means they sometimes embody differences in values, beliefs and practices—at both social and professional levels—compared to their local counterparts. Yet, much like the local teachers, immigrant teachers must also

carry the mantle as agents of Singapore's national education. Thus, on the one hand, immigrant teachers potentially add diversity or difference to the Singapore school system; on the other hand, they are also expected to fit into the role of the educator and civil servant.

This article reports on an MOE-NIE funded study (OER 16/17 YPD) that explored the trajectories, identities, and integration experiences of immigrant teachers in Singapore schools. The broad research questions that guided this study included: firstly, who are the immigrant teachers in Singapore schools – namely, what demographic characteristics does this group exhibit? Secondly, what characterises the migration trajectories and experiences of these teachers? Thirdly, what are these immigrant teachers' experiences of integration in societal and professional contexts?

Context: Singapore As A Society Of Immigration and Diversity

Singapore ranks among cities/countries in the world with the highest immigrant ratios and diversities. As of mid-2019, Singapore hosted a total population of 5.7 million, of which slightly more than 70% (4 million) were 'resident' population, which in turn comprised about 3.5 million citizens and half a million Permanent Residents (PRs) (Prime Minister's Office, 2019). Since citizens included naturalised ones, the total foreign-born population in Singapore is in fact higher, estimated to be more than 46% of the total population in 2017 (United Nations, 2017).

Historically, due to migrations in the 19th and early-20th Centuries under the British colonial rule (1819-1963), Singapore had evolved into an ethnically and culturally diverse society, made up of an ethnic Chinese majority and minority

groups from Southeast Asia and South Asia. The post-colonial (1965 onwards) Singapore state made 'multiracialism' an official ideology, aspiring towards a society where the various 'racial' groups maintain their respective community cultures and traditions while coexisting in harmony. Concretely, ethnic and cultural diversities in Singapore came to be governed through the so-called 'CMIO' (Chinese-Malay-Indian-Other) framework. One important manifestation of the CMIO institution in education is the bilingualism policy, where Singaporeans of various 'racial' groups are expected to learn their respective ethnic 'mother tongues' (MT) as a mandatory subject in school in addition to the common working language of English. The three main MT languages taught in government-run schools in Singapore are Chinese (Mandarin), Malay, and Tamil; this also means that there is a significant need in the education system for MT language teachers.

The CMIO model also holds significance for immigration and integration in contemporary context. The latest statistics in 2019 shows that the racial make-up of the citizen population is: Chinese 76%; Malay 15%; Indian 7.5%; and 'other' 1.5% (Prime Minister's Office, 2019). Sources show that this composition has changed little in the past several decades, despite the various 'racial' groups' significantly different birth rates since the 1980s, with those of the Chinese and Indians notably lower than that of the Malays (Nasir & Turner, 2014; Prime Minister's Office, 2018). In fact, immigration has been calibrated according to the CMIO model so as to maintain the existing racial make-up, which is believed to be key to social harmony and the preservation of the cultural tenor of Singapore society. With regard to immigrant diversity, Singapore is said to adopt mainly an integration framework (Rahman & Kiong, 2013), where the

emphasis is more on structural inclusion than cultural assimilation. In other words, from the state's point of view, key to the integration of immigrants is their inclusion in mainstream social structures and institutions such as employment, education, and housing, whereas there is less emphasis on achieving cultural assimilation or homogeneity given Singapore society's multicultural and plural reality in the first place.

The Study: Immigrant Teachers In Mainstream Singapore Schools

In this study, an 'immigrant teacher' is defined as someone born or raised outside Singapore, not educated in Singapore at K-12 stage, and working as a teacher in a mainstream (thus excluding international schools, madrasahs, and other specialized schools) primary or secondary school that comes under the Singapore government. An immigrant teacher may hold a work pass, or permanent residence (PR) or citizenship status in Singapore.

To gather demographic data on the immigrant teachers, an online survey request was disseminated via the principals of all mainstream primary and secondary schools in the country. Principals who approved of the study would then have forwarded the survey to eligible teachers for their voluntary participation. Eventually, a total of 144 valid responses were collected. While this study does not claim to make highly reliable predictions, the sample size obtained (n=144) means that the survey findings can be expected to be reasonably indicative of the immigrant teacher population.

In addition to the survey, the study used interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to gather qualitative data to obtain in-depth insights into immigrant teachers' experiences. Interview and FGD

participants were recruited from survey respondents who expressed interest. In total, 23 immigrant teachers (China-background=7; Malaysia-background=7; India-background=5; other backgrounds=4) took part in one-on-one interviews—in most cases, two interviews for each participant. Two FGDs, respectively involving two and three immigrant teacher discussants, were conducted. Additionally, four FGDs were carried out with local school leaders and teachers to obtain their perspectives and experiences working with immigrant teachers. The survey was administered in English; interviews with nine MT (Chinese) teachers and one of the FGDs involving two MT (Chinese) teachers were conducted in Mandarin; the remaining interviews/FGDs were all carried out in English. All sessions were fully transcribed in their respective medium languages and coded using the NVivo software subsequently.

Key Findings

1. Demographic profile

The survey found that the two most significant sources of migrant-background teachers in Singapore schools were China (mainland) (n= 65; 45.5% of the sample) and Malaysia (n= 52; 36.4%), altogether accounting for every 4 in 5 teachers in the sample. Another distinctive pattern is that nearly 80% of the survey respondents were Mother Tongue (MT) language teachers: in the case of those from China, close to 97% (n=63) were MT (Chinese) teachers, whereas for those from Malaysia (all of whom happened to be ethnically Chinese), 73% taught MT (Chinese).

This contrasted sharply with the remaining teachers in the sample, which were characterised by rather diverse life/career backgrounds as well as teaching subjects. Among teachers from India (n=17;

11.9% of the sample), nearly half taught non-MT subjects such as English Literature, Sciences, Social Studies, and History. The rest, whose countries (or territories) of origin/education included New Zealand, Canada, Japan, UAE, Hong Kong, etc., also taught a wide range of non-MT subjects. Some of these teachers had been brought up and educated in Western countries, or were schooled in English-medium international schools, or had otherwise cosmopolitan life and career trajectories such as having lived and/or worked in a number of countries. To distinguish them from the mainstream immigrant teachers who were ethnically Chinese and taught MT (Chinese), this

more diverse group is subsequently referred to as ‘non-MT (Chinese) immigrant teachers’ or, sometimes, ‘non-mainstream immigrant teachers’.

Finally, about 57% (n=82) of the sample were secondary school teachers, the rest taught in primary schools; however, among teachers from China those teaching in primary schools were the majority (n=39; 60%). In terms of gender, a significant majority (n=113; 78.5%) of the sample were female. With regard to age, 84% of them were between 30 and 50 years old, with a mean age of 38.7.

Figure 1. Immigrant teachers’ countries (or territories) of origin and gender distribution

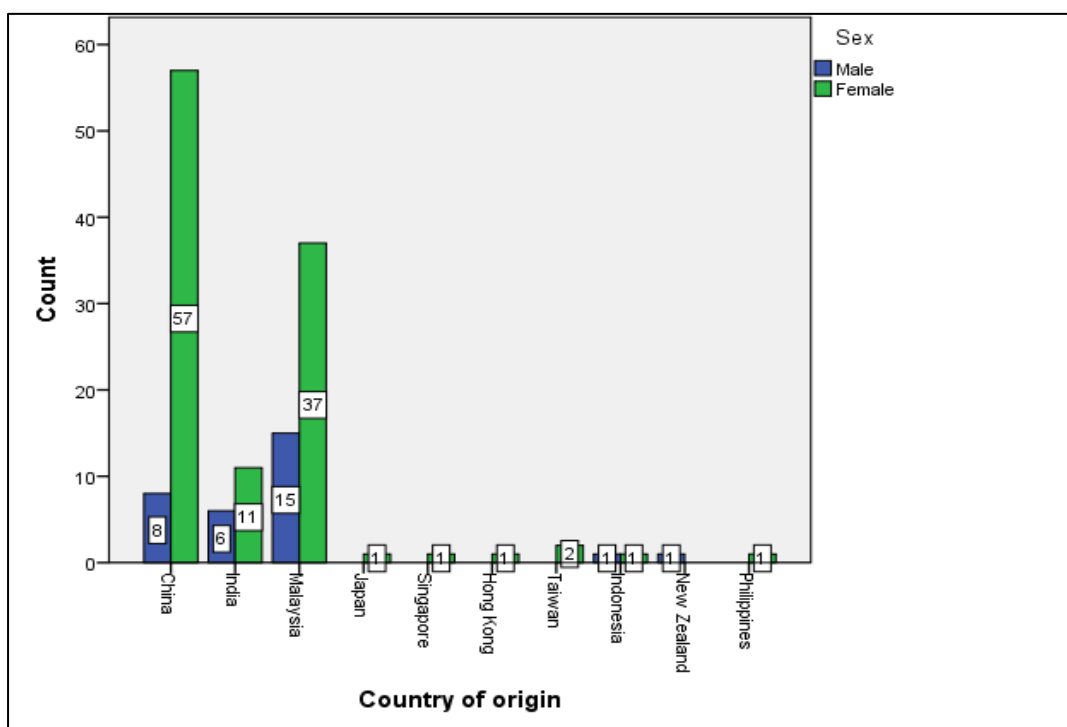


Figure 2. Immigrant teachers' immigration status based on their countries (or territories) of origin

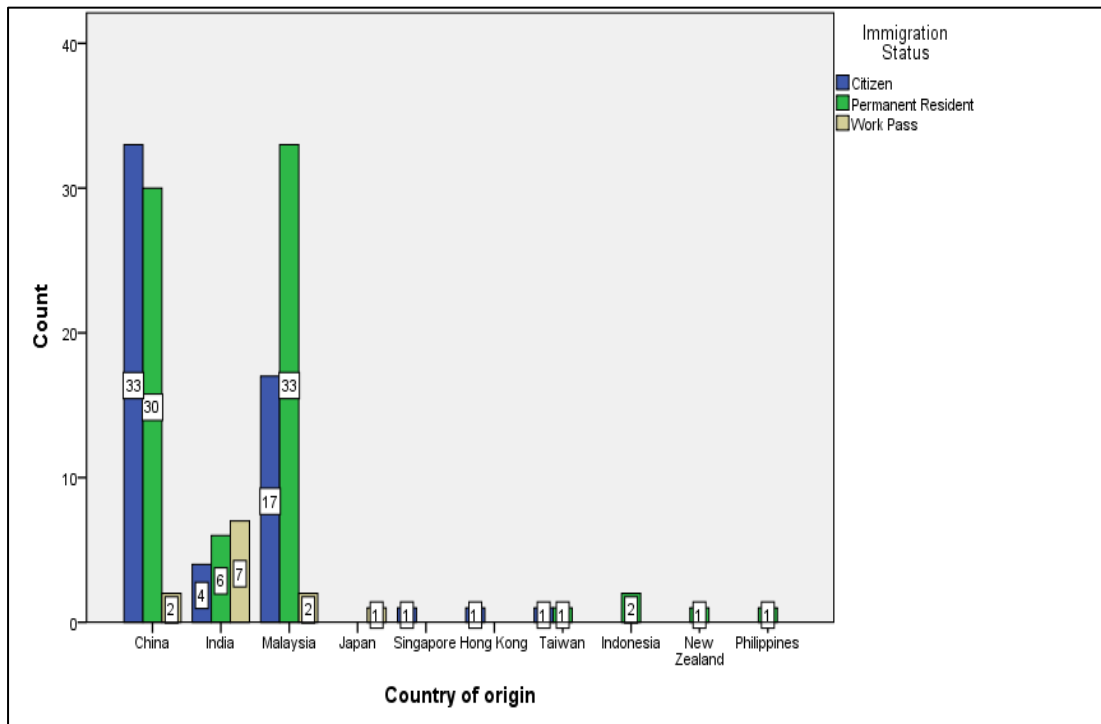
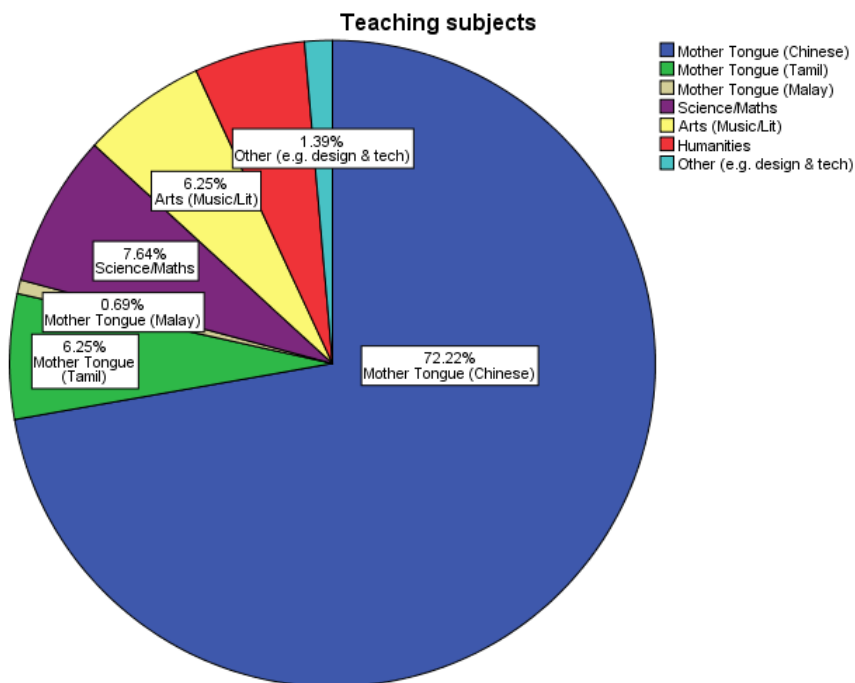


Figure 3. Immigrant teachers' teaching subjects



2. Settlement and self-reported social and professional integration

Apart from exploring immigrant teachers' demographic profile, the survey also asked basic questions about their migration/settlement situations as well as their self-perceived social and professional integration. Because 'integration' is a widely used term in Singapore society thanks to ubiquitous government policy discourse, this study did not provide an explicit definition of the term, but instead relied on the common-sense consensus on its meaning.

Immigrant teachers in the sample have lived for an average of 14.39 years in Singapore; among them, 30% have lived for 10 years or less; about 60% for 10-20 years; and the remaining 10% for more than 20 years. At the time of survey, 40% (n=58) of the respondents held Singapore Citizenship, and slightly more than half (51.39%; n=74) were Permanent Residents (PR), whereas work pass holders only accounted for 8.33%. Virtually all China-background (63 out of 65) and Malaysia-background (50 out of 52) teachers were citizens or PRs (thus considered 'resident population' in the official definition), but for teachers from India—the largest minority group—7 out of 17 were still holding work passes.

In general, all respondents regarded themselves as well integrated in Singapore society, giving themselves an average integration score of 4.14 (on a scale of 1 to 5, with '5' indicating the fullest extent of integration). Among teachers from China, Malaysia and India, the self-assessed integration score reported by the Chinese (3.92) was slightly below average, compared to above-average scores reported by Malaysians (4.37) and Indians (4.64). It is interesting to note that Indian-background teachers' mean score surpassed that of Malaysian-background teachers.

With regard to professional integration, immigrant teachers generally found adjusting to and integrating in local school settings manageable and not too difficult. Respondents were asked how difficult it was for them to adjust to their *first school* in Singapore with regard to four professional aspects: (1) school administration; (2) teaching practices; (3) curriculum differences; (4) school values. On a scale of 1 to 5, with '1' representing the least difficulty, most teachers chose between '1' to '3' for all four aspects. Among these aspects, school administration (2.44) seemed the most difficult to adjust to, followed closely by teaching practices (2.34), and curriculum differences (2.24); interestingly, integrating into their first schools in terms of school values seemed the least difficult (1.92) for teachers from all backgrounds.

Regarding all four aspects of integration, China-background teachers consistently reported difficulty levels slightly higher than the sample means (namely, they found it more difficult), whereas teachers from India and Malaysia reported difficulty levels below the sample means. However, it should be noted that the differences between the scores here were all minimal.

3. Professional experiences

Qualitative data from the study revealed a range of insights into the professional experiences of the immigrant teachers. MT (Chinese) teachers, especially those hailing from China, typically mentioned that their weaker command of the English language represented an obstacle to their social and professional integration, although they often added that their schools and colleagues were usually understanding and accommodative. This group of teachers also often found the multiple roles a teacher in a Singapore school is required to play (especially administrative roles in addition

to teaching) something they had to adapt to.

Most immigrant teachers in one way or another mentioned that their lack of local Singaporean experience and knowledge hindered their rapport building with Singaporean students. At the same time, however, they also tended to consider it a strength that they could bring into their teaching different perspectives and viewpoints stemming from their backgrounds. Several immigrant teachers of non-Chinese ethnic backgrounds reported frustrating experiences to do with the rejection of their PR applications, and some held perceptions that their career progression were adversely affected as a result. Among non-MT (Chinese) immigrant teachers, especially those with Western upbringing or education, some reported experiences of encountering and negotiating with dominant values and practices in Singaporean schools that were at odds with their personal values and beliefs.

Due to space limit, the following accounts shall focus on MT (Chinese) teachers' challenges in relation to CCE teaching and some non-MT teachers' experiences of value tensions as manifested in the context of sexuality education. All names used in the following accounts are pseudonyms, and occasionally information such as the teachers' teaching subjects and their national backgrounds have been removed to avoid identification.

3a. MT (Chinese) teachers' challenge: Language barriers hindering CCE teaching

The catchphrase coined by the Ministry of Education, 'Every teacher a CCE teacher' (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 8), reflects the Ministry's expectation in involving all teachers in implementing National Education regardless of their subject expertise. Generally, the schools involved

in this study were found to deploy all teachers, immigrant or local, to implement CCE in secondary classrooms. Consequently, many immigrant MT teachers, specifically those hailing from China, who possessed low(er) levels of English language proficiency, struggled to deliver CCE lessons in English.

The difficulties raised by MT immigrant teachers typically revolved around the disproportionate time required for lesson preparation and their diminished capacities to engage students in an unfamiliar language. For example, Mei (female, 46), a naturalized citizen from mainland China, shared that even after spending five hours preparing for a single CCE lesson, she was still unable to 'give the students the best' because she lacked the ability to provide any enriching material beyond the standardized resources. Thus, she retrospectively characterized her CCE teaching as a 'loss' for the students' values education. Other immigrant MT (Chinese) teachers were consistent in corroborating Mei's experience, where despite the significant amount of time spent on CCE lesson preparation, the lesson delivery typically consisted of 'just following and reading off the PowerPoint slides'.

Interestingly, despite their difficulties with English, MT immigrant teachers also often appeared to be the strongest advocates for CCE. Mei expressed the enthusiasm and frustration that she simultaneously experienced with regard to CCE:

Actually, I really like talking to students about these views on life, or share my experiences [...] I can talk non-stop; I like sharing, but I just can't share! English is the largest obstacle.

Indeed, a similar enthusiasm can be found among other MT immigrant teachers who perceived themselves as vessels of

cultural values, something thought to be under-fulfilled by other local teachers, teaching MT or otherwise. Xia (female, 47), also a naturalized citizen from mainland China, opined that her Chinese background meant that her experience was culturally 'broader' and 'deeper' (compared to the local teachers), and that her capacity to preserve and impart such values constituted a 'natural responsibility' of an MT teacher. However, when pressed to provide details about the unique ways their cultural strengths contributed to the system, most MT immigrant teachers from China revealed that their impact in schools remained minimal. Ling (female, 49), who works in the same department as Xia, concurred with her colleague on the relative depth of their knowledge in Chinese culture, but elaborated that students would 'shut down' the moment they realize 'Oh, this bears no relation to the exams'. As such, utilization of MT immigrant teachers' cultural strengths typically does not go beyond occasional festivities (such as the preparation of ethnic food or decorating for festivals).

School leaders who participated in this study's FGDs shared that they were cognizant of the difficulties MT immigrant teachers faced and made sure that a local teacher would always be deployed alongside the immigrant teacher. This allowed the local-immigrant pair to manage the CCE teaching duties more flexibly, whereby the local teacher played to their strengths (i.e. local background and knowledge) while the immigrant teacher compensated by focusing on tasks that were less language-demanding (e.g. administration or classroom management).

3b. Non-MT/non-mainstream immigrant teachers: value tensions in sexuality education

For non-MT and ethnically 'Other'

immigrant teachers who were characterised by notably more diverse and sometimes more cosmopolitan backgrounds, challenges in the professional settings manifested rather differently, often revolving around having differences, sometimes disagreements, with dominant schooling values and practices in Singapore.

Sexuality education is a case in point. Reflecting official government stance and mainstream societal mores on sexuality in Singapore, sexuality education in Singapore schools promotes abstinence and upholds the view that family based on heterosexual marriage constitutes the basic unit of society (Liew 2014). About this, a few non-mainstream background immigrant teachers had things to say.

For example, John (male, 32, Caucasian background), who is a sexuality education trained teacher, said that he had 'slightly different views' from what the MOE considered promiscuous or risky behaviour, and he 'definitely' had different views on same-sex relationships and 'what can and cannot be allowed', implying that his position was more liberal.

Ann (female, 27, East Asian background but educated in an English-medium international school), too, held a liberal position:

For example, with things like LGBT issues. Umm, for me it's like, my personal opinion is that it's a given that LGBT people should have the same rights, umm they should have the right to marry and things like that. But, umm, I was quite taken aback to hear that there are some Singaporean teachers and some students as well who... I think not just based on religious reasons, but for various reasons don't feel that LGBT people belong in society.

Similarly, Ajay (male, 32) from India shared that MOE teachers ‘have to be very clear about the sense that the heterosexual [...] relationship is the basic of the society’, something which conflicted with his personal views. When students who self-identified as LGBT opened to Ajay about their sexuality-related struggles and sought advice, he was caught in a dilemma where ‘I cannot tell the child “It is ok”. Because the child might go back and tell the parents “My teacher say it is ok”, then I’m in trouble. But the thing is, I do believe it is ok.’ As a result, Ajay felt that he could not give support and guidance to the student in a way that he believed was right.

Hannah (female, 30) was a Singaporean passport holder with mixed parentage, but had been raised and educated mainly in English-medium international schools in a Middle East country. Although Hannah identified as Muslim and wore a *tudung*, she had some disagreements with the way sexuality education is approached in Singapore schools. Sceptical of the effectiveness of simply preaching sexual abstinence to youth, Hannah believed that such an approach was tantamount to avoiding the issue of adolescents engaging in sex. Hannah also came across as somewhat frustrated and disappointed about the mainstream heteronormative conception of the nuclear family that continued to serve as the cornerstone of official policy.

These instances show that for immigrant teachers embodying non-mainstream, cosmopolitan diversities, encountering certain dominant values in Singapore schools stood out in their professional integration experiences. It is worth noting that in interviews/FGDs with Chinese and Malaysian-Chinese research participants, participants themselves seldom brought up disagreements with these values and norms in question. In fact, qualitative data shows

that Chinese- and Malaysian-background teachers tended to regard themselves as highly compatible and well-aligned with the prevailing practices and values in the local system. Malaysian teachers routinely cited the geographical and cultural proximity and shared histories between Malaysia and Singapore to explain their high level of identification with the system, whereas mainland Chinese teachers tended to emphasize that the Chinese/Confucian values underpinning education in Singapore were essentially the same with their own backgrounds and beliefs.

Integration through adjustment, negotiation, and compromise

Immigrant teachers’ experiences of value tensions in relation to sexuality education and the ways in which they dealt with such tensions can serve to illuminate their broader approaches towards professional integration. Overall, all immigrant teachers were explicit in recognizing their positions as employees of a national civil service, and correspondingly the duties and boundaries expected of them. While none of the immigrant teachers found themselves completely changing their personal beliefs about sexuality education, in work settings, some came to adjust their stance, some accepted compromise but entered into subtle negotiations with the system, yet others chose to compromise—but in a disengaging way.

Brought up and educated in an Anglophone country, John used to consider the official MOE approach on sexuality education ineffective in the early days of his teaching career in Singapore. But gradually, he realized that because of the diversity of Singaporean students’ family backgrounds and value systems, a Comprehensive Sexuality Education approach would almost unavoidably become problematic.

He thus came to appreciate the ‘delicate position’ that MOE was in, and found himself more in agreement with the MOE’s approach nowadays, even though he still did not necessarily agree with the substantive values *per se*.

Ann equally appreciated the sensitivity of LGBT topics, especially considering the influence she possessed as a teacher. She stressed that her professional role meant that she must avoid taking a stance:

So that’s something [LGBT] that I very quickly realized, you know, I can’t really, like, openly talk about, especially in a government school in Singapore. [...] I stand at a position of authority, you know, as a teacher, so I think it’s very dangerous for me to say one thing or another when it comes to such issues, I can’t openly say “Oh you know we should respect gay people”, I also can’t say “Oh gay people are going to hell”. I can’t do either, but I think ummm, I think I am able to, if the students raise such issues, get them to think about it from both sides of the argument? [...] my personal opinions may conflict with the Singapore government’s opinions, on what is ok and what is not ok, but I think as a teacher I am able to get the students to sort of think about it from all the different perspectives.

Despite making the adaptation and compromise her professional role necessitated, Ann did not entirely fold under the pressures of official expectations, but took advantage of her role to provide her students the opportunity to think through controversial issues from different perspectives. Thus, her mode of integrating into the local education system was not entirely passive assimilation, but a *negotiative* process.

Separately, Ann also shared that when students expressed interest or curiosity on certain issues—such as LGBT and feminism—she utilised her literature classes to explore these topics through themed literary texts. This approach allowed Ann to engage students in exploring critical issues that would otherwise be largely absent from the official curriculum. However, unsure whether this approach would be considered ‘neutral’ by her supervisor, who was reportedly more conservative, Ann maintained a low profile about her approach.

Some other teachers accepted the necessity of making compromise in order to be in line with the official stance, but doing so led to a sense of disengagement. Such appeared to be the case for Hannah, as she confessed that ‘sexuality education is one of those things I don’t want to be trained in’. Hannah’s frustration towards sexuality education reflected her problem with what she saw as a broader culture in Singapore of prioritising consensus over conflict. Hannah noted that early in her teaching career, the preferred approach in her school towards controversial issues was one of avoidance rather than critical dialogue:

[...] I know that, umm, some of my colleagues and my Singaporean friends, they are very happy to, you know, sweep [things] under and wait for the mountain to grow’. [...] I’d rather just talk about it [...] yah, conversations I think for people [in Singapore] are very scary. Yah, so now I have to be very cautious about when I have conversations with people, because you don’t want to offend them and don’t want to feel like you are attacking them.’

To make things more challenging, as a science teacher, Hannah lacked the avenues

that literature or SS teachers had to critically engage students in controversial issues. As a result, making the necessary compromise to fit into a local school felt to Hannah like wearing a 'mask' that concealed her beliefs. Compared to Ann, Hannah appeared more sceptical about a teacher's agency in negotiating with the system. She felt that despite a discourse about teachers as change agents (Chen, 2007; National Institute of Education, n.d.), teachers were not truly empowered to initiate changes on issues such as sexuality education.

Discussions with local school leaders confirmed a similar expectation of immigrant teachers to 'live up to expectations'. As one local Vice Principal stated in an FGD:

'[...] one thing that has to be very clear, is when you go into the classroom, [...] the message should be all in unison, regardless of whether you are a Singapore teacher or you are a foreign teacher. Especially so for the foreign teacher, I think they really have to live up to the expectations [...] that the Singapore education system has of all the teachers lah.'

In other words, immigrant teachers operate under an overall assimilationist expectation from the system. Where tensions or clashes in values are felt, these teachers have limited room for negotiation. Whether the immigrant teachers dealt with such tensions and clashes by adjusting, subtly negotiating, or compromising with a sense of futility, they were always careful not to let their personal values and beliefs hinder their professional integration. Ultimately, they remained very conscious of their role as civil servants representing the Ministry of Education.

Conclusion and recommendation

Foreign and migrant-background teachers in mainstream primary and secondary schools constitute a sub-group within Singapore's teaching fraternity that has received little research attention so far. Drawing on possibly the first study of this kind done in Singapore, this paper has sought to present an overall picture of these immigrant teachers' profiles and their professional experiences. The study found that this group as a whole is well integrated, notwithstanding which immigrant teachers also encountered and negotiated with certain obstacles or tensions in the process of their professional integration. In the case of the MT (Chinese) immigrant teachers, they felt that the language barrier hindered them from utilising their unique cultural strengths and resources to enrich CCE learning for Singaporean students. Among non-MT immigrant teachers—especially those with more diverse and cosmopolitan life/career trajectories—having to negotiate with dominant local school values and practices that were at odds with their personal values and beliefs was a commonly reported experience.

Immigrant teachers typically dealt with such challenges in a pragmatic fashion, prioritising professional integration with a view to fitting in. Overall, the immigrant teachers in this study were highly conscious of their role as civil servants employed by a government ministry, and thus carefully observed the boundaries and norms governing their professional setting. Where tensions in values and ideologies were indeed experienced, immigrant teachers were careful to keep their personal stances and beliefs outside the classroom. At times, they genuinely shifted their views as a result of working in the Singapore system which allowed them to develop a greater appreciation of the local context and point of view. In other instances, the immigrant

teachers entered into subtle negotiations with the system, exercising a modest degree of teacher agency without challenging the status quo.

Considering that educating Singaporean students to become cosmopolitan and critically minded global citizens requires certain exposures to diverse values and perspectives, it might be said that immigrant teachers—especially those embodying non-mainstream backgrounds and cosmopolitan values and outlooks—have a unique role to play in terms of adding diversity to the education system and broadening students' intellectual and moral horizons. Findings from this study show that while immigrant teachers currently are well placed to enrich Singapore school education through their subject knowledge/expertise (particularly in terms of Mother Tongue language expertise), there may be further potential to leverage on these teachers' inherent diversities of experiences, perspectives and value orientations to contribute to education in Singapore in a more well-rounded way.

The overall positive social and professional integration experiences reported by immigrant teachers attest to the education system's existing capacity to accommodate diverse skill sets and talents. Thus, future policies relating to teacher recruitment and teacher development could possibly further tap into the immense diversity of cultural values, life experiences, and intellectual and moral outlooks of immigrant teachers to maximise their value-add to the Singapore education system.

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