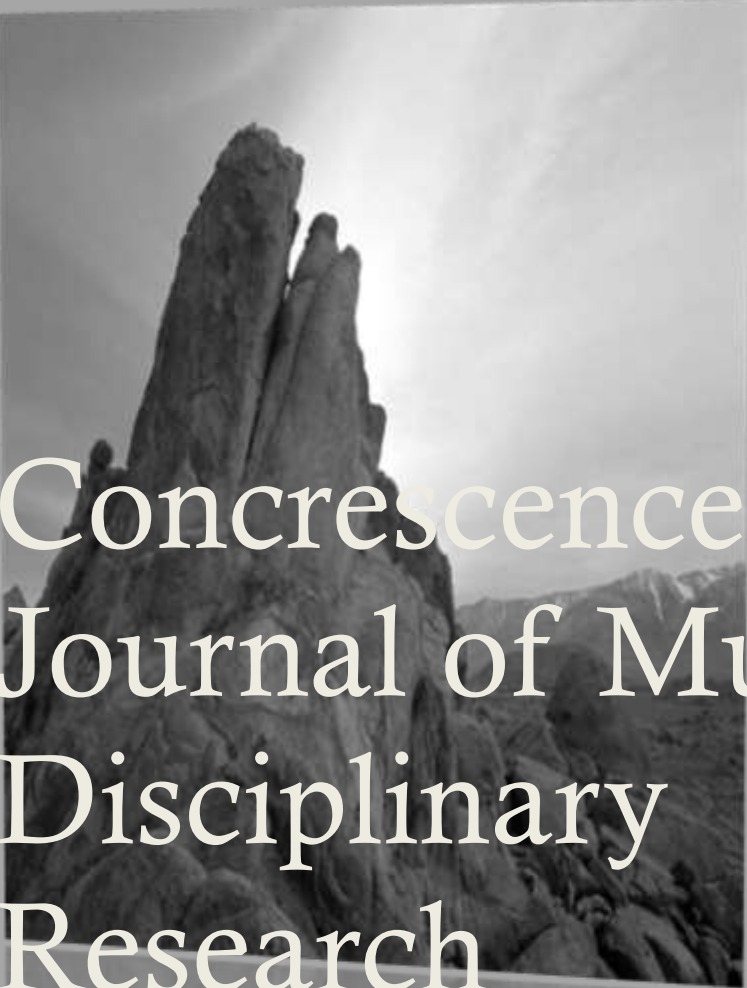




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Fostering Inclusive Practices for Children of 'Other Cultures': A Children's Theatre Approach

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Abstract

With globalization, there is an increase in migration of people driven by a variety of factors like economic opportunities, access to quality education, war and conflicts, availability of social amenities, and in recent times, climate change. It has therefore become imperative to understand how to foster inclusive practices for children from other cultures to promote social cohesion, peaceful cohabitation, and equitable learning environments. This preliminary study delves into understanding the multifaceted landscape of cultural diversity and integration. It will explore diverse viewpoints, experiences, complexities, and challenges in crafting inclusive spaces for children in a multicultural environment. Furthermore, it will interrogate the complexities in an ever-evolving cultural tapestry of their memories, experiences, and emotions to define their identities and personalities and weigh their capacities to remain connected to their original cultures. Through quantitative research involving questionnaires, the study engages children in Junior Secondary Schools in discovering challenges, strategies, and benefits of creating inclusive spaces for them in their new environments. The outcome of this research is to pave the way for further studies with children through theatrical productions to highlight the importance of cultural responsiveness, intercultural communication, embracing cultural diversity, addressing the unique needs of children from other cultures, and equipping them in their multicultural journey. Finally, this study will unravel nuanced experiences, identity issues, societal shifts, and cultural boundaries that children grapple with, which affect their perception and reception of other cultures.

Keywords: Migration, Inclusivity, Other Cultures, Multiculturalism, Integration.

Introduction

Migration is 'the movement of a person or people from one country, place or locality, place of residence, etc., to settle in another' (Imram, 2023, np.). It is a common phenomenon among humans as they seek constant means of survival. Migration is increasingly being acknowledged as an issue of global concern that has triggered approaches and coordinated responses. Migration has contributed in no small way to the richness of cultural diversity worldwide, leading to resettlements of people from localities, borders, states, and nations. Most times, the underlying factor is the quest for better living, which guarantees better opportunities. Migration is influenced by many factors, such as economic, political crises,

war, insecurity, famine, drought, traumatic experiences, and fear of the unknown, which can cause people to leave their places of origin voluntarily or involuntarily, and seek acceptance and recognition in a completely new environment. Migrants learn a new way of life in their new societies while striving to maintain cultural identities that, in some instances, may lead to confusion, discrimination, and in severe cases, racism. Currently, in Nigeria, there is an exodus of people, especially young people, fleeing to other shores in Europe, the US, the UK, and Asia to seek better living conditions. Just as there is a massive relocation abroad, so is the increase in the movement of people from rural areas to urban societies in Nigeria, driven by various reasons, which also present challenges. There is an influx of rural-urban migration due to better job opportunities, education, safety, and access to social amenities. Lagos State is a heterogeneous society that accommodates people from diverse cultures who have relocated for better living conditions away from their original societies. In a study by Okuneye, Adebayo, Opeolu, and Badru (2007), they addressed the adverse effects of migration and uncoordinated growth on health and the environment in Lagos State. This implies that migration comes at a cost for both migrants and indigenes or original dwellers. The process of settling into new environments poses challenges that may sometimes lead to misinterpretation, misunderstanding, or misconception during the integration into a new society.

Societies have become increasingly diversified as a result of cultural background and outlook. Lin (2019) gives a broad perspective of cultural diversity as a debatable, open-ended discussion that generally refers to the reality of the coexistence of diverse knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, religions, languages, abilities, and disabilities, genders, ethnicities, races, nationalities, sexual orientations, etc. of human beings. The need for inclusion has never been more critical than it is now. The need has arisen for mutual respect in societies that celebrate these diversities to foster cohesion, understanding, and mutual co-existence. The call for an inclusive culture is now widespread, mainly as a result of the migration of people in search of better living and livelihood. The harsh realities of economic conditions serve as a springboard for movement, especially as parents, in most instances, relocate with their children in search of greener pastures. Creating inclusive spaces for children in Badagry is an opportunity for children to grow with equity and in the interest of ethnic nationalities.

Another perspective on inclusive spaces is embracing people with disabilities and vulnerabilities, although this is not the focus of this study. This category of children can participate and benefit from development and equitable opportunities. It eliminates social and physical barriers to opportunities, support, and attention for children living with disabilities or medical conditions that could restrict or hinder their involvement in social life. It is expected that all children, apart from their gender, age, race, religious inclination, and social class, must have equal exposure, equity, and opportunities within a regular school setting (Budiarti, 2018). This promotes a sense of inclusive space where children respect and celebrate different, unique, and diverse cultural backgrounds. Children from diverse cultural backgrounds, like no other time, need an inclusive space where they can be equally exposed to multicultural environments. Children receive cultural influences from their parents, media, school settings, and the environment. It is therefore essential to foster environments where children can feel valued, understood, and accepted. Creating inclusive spaces for children ensures the integration of cultural identity into their learning experience. This is a way to promote equity, reduce biases, and create an enabling environment to nurture children and provide a platform for opportunities to thrive. This

enhances and enriches the educational experiences that prepare children to navigate and integrate into global communities.

Conceptual Clarification of Terms

Inclusive spaces

The meaning of inclusion remains a topic open to extensive discussion. Prince and Hadwin (2012) associate inclusion with “belonging, while Booth and Ainscow (2011) see it as “participation”. Veck (2014) gives a historical background of inclusion to have arisen from the concepts of equity and rights as a means of addressing injustice, inequalities, and unacceptability, especially for children with disabilities, etc. Educators like student teachers, class teachers, and professionals have begun to decipher issues surrounding diversity in multicultural school settings, and of utmost importance in this web is the student who is at the nucleus of education and all activities associated with it. Prince and Hadwin (2012) further posit inclusion as extending beyond mere physical presence in the classroom to include active and meaningful participation in educational activities, which is a major determinant for the emotional and social well-being of students.

Inclusive spaces for children refer to environments where every child feels valued and accepted, irrespective of their cultural background. For children, in this category, inclusive spaces include education, communities, and extracurricular activities where they interact with others to learn the ropes of their new environment. These spaces serve as foundational environments to integrate and reorient cultures with which they will constantly be in contact. These social interactions are crucial to children in many ways. They see their cultures as recognized and accepted in their new environment. This boosts their self-esteem and belief in their intrinsic value, despite their cultural background. Consequently, this promotes cultural competence in children, which is the ability to communicate effectively, interact, and integrate with people from other cultures. Children learn about and become acquainted with different cultural practices, are inquisitive about the differences in these practices, and develop essential skills to navigate a multicultural world. Additionally, children’s ability to navigate social complexities across cultural divides is a developmental process that enhances cognitive and social skills through relating and interacting with peers from diverse cultures. Their perspectives are broadened, their critical thinking skills are enhanced, and they develop empathy, which is essentially required for humanity.

By creating inclusive spaces for children, they recognize bias and apathy for cultural differences and attempt to reduce their impact through awareness and involvement. Inclusivity creates environments where children foster understanding, empathy, and acceptance. It is easier for them to overcome barriers and be inspired to learn, grow, interact, and connect. Apart from enriching children's experiences, inclusive spaces will promote harmony and equity in society. In a nutshell, inclusivity is a platform for embracing diversity and opportunities in a multicultural world. It creates a climate in which respect, equity, and positive recognition of differences are well-articulated, cultivated, and embraced.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism suggests a society where individuals foster a sense of belonging by creating spaces for themselves within an already established cultural framework. It is a term that emphasizes the diversity of culture and society emerging from the cultural eruptions of the 1960s (Mandible, 2012). Multicultural societies are necessitated by cultural diversity within a shared space and culture. While this could be beneficial, it could also be a harbinger of problems. Recognizing these dimensions is a trigger for mutual co-existence in

a multicultural society. Children interact with diverse cultural identities and school experiences to support positive child development. In the school setting, culture is defined in the broadest sense to include “race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation...” (Hipperg, 2021, p.24). In this stance, education is predicated on the principles of multiculturalism, which implies educational equity for all students, regardless of their cultural background. It ensures equal opportunities, removing barriers, and establishes a conducive learning environment. Students are exposed to diverse cultures through class activities, books, experiences, and lessons in preparation to gain acceptance and recognition in an ever-changing and dynamic world.

Lekkai noted that “Children living in today’s multicultural community face constant change in their family, community, school, etc” (Lekkai, 2018, p. 20). This becomes a major change that could pose a threat to emotional development, stability, and balance, which they are not fully prepared for. Subsequently, children need to develop resilience, ability, and competence to efficiently cope and implement adaptive behaviours despite disruptive events, thereby fostering resilience in educational settings within a multicultural society. The starting point is by attempting to understand positive adaptive traits, individual variations, social competence, and compliance. A resilient child will “... maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological, and capacity for generative experiences and positive emotions (Bonanno, in Lekkai 2018, p.21). Children's resilience means “the ability to recover from traumatic experiences and develop the skills to overcome future challenges drawing from personal external (I have), internal (I am) and interpersonal (I can) (Shader, 2004, p.13). This study, while not ruling out personal, external, and internal factors, is more concerned with interpersonal factors. An interpersonal relationship is a major feature of a multicultural society. There must be levels of interaction and interface among children in any setting. These relationships inform the experiences of the child and the ability to develop personality characteristics and attributes of the wider social environment.

Badagry as a Multicultural Town

Badagry is always remembered for two major things in Nigeria's history. It is the first place Christianity was preached before it started spreading to other parts of the country and remarkably has the first storey building in Nigeria where Bishop Ajayi Crowther translated the Holy Bible to the Yoruba language. Second, it played a role in promoting the trans-Atlantic slave trade as an important terminus for the shipping of enslaved Africans for most of the 19th Century (Osho, 2016). So, Badagry has always been poised as a beautiful bride to be wooed by foreigners, migrants, and dwellers. The choice of Badagry as a multicultural town in this study is based on the fact that, like other areas in Lagos State, it has experienced a significant influx of migrants from other parts of Nigeria and foreigners from other African nations. Indigenes of Badagry are the ‘Ogun’ (Egun) people, migrants from Gold Coast (Ghana), Dahomey (Benin Republic), Togo and the Awori, a Yoruba-speaking tribe. The main occupations are fishing, mat weaving, and general merchandise. The origin of Badagry posits the town as multicultural in nature, housing two major tribes of non-Yoruba (Ogun) and Yoruba (Awori) speakers. This is perhaps one of the points of attraction for modern-day migrants who have made Badagry their home and abode.

Its location on the international route to neighbouring West African countries, like the Benin Republic, Togo, and Ghana, provides opportunities for smuggling of contrabands and commodities, especially rice, and fairly used clothes (known as ‘Okrika’ or ‘second hand’), tyres, and cars (government policies on car importation have curbed this) into Nigeria. By proxy, its closeness to the last town in the Benin Republic is attractive to settlers who readily exploit this attribute to their advantage. It is expedient to recognize and embrace the

diverse nature of people who have become migrants in Badagry. Badagry is still a developing area among the five divisions in Lagos State and has major government institutions along this axis. They are Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo; Lagos State University of Education (LASUED), Oto/Ijanikin; Federal Medical Postgraduate College, Ijanikin; Federal Government College (FGC), Ijanikin; and Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON). This array of institutions suggests that Badagry is home to both high- and low-income earners, as well as elites (teachers, lecturers, students, and uniformed personnel), and non-elites (traders and artisans). Moreover, the living costs are affordable, accommodation is cheaper, and the environment is close to nature, cleaner, and more secure.

Additionally, education is readily accessible to children, thanks to the widespread presence of private and public schools throughout the town. These attributes make Badagry town endearing to Easterners, Middle Belters, and Northerners. Badagry, as a multicultural town, is home to thousands of migrants from various nationalities, including Igbo, Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Tiv, and others from the Republic of Benin, Togo, and Ghana. This makes the choice of Badagry suitable for this study on how the children of migrants find inclusivity in their new environment.

Children of 'Other Cultures'

Childhood is a crucial developmental stage in a child's life. According to Isidenu (2017), a child's cultural background influences their relationship with others and their life disposition. Children in their formative years already established notions that may be difficult to change because their formed behaviours are forms of identity. This could be a major cause of differences in individual characters, which may become a barrier or an advantage to socialization in their new environment. The concept of 'other cultures' in this study refers to children whose parents have left their cultural background to become migrants in Badagry. Some of these children were born in Badagry following their parents' relocation, while others were brought from rural areas across the country to settle in Badagry, an urban area. The training a child receives at home within the cultural context makes a difference in the culture of other people and determines adaptability and acceptability. These categories of children are already exposed to certain experiences, attitudes, values, arts, languages, and belief systems, but must unlearn and relearn to properly integrate into the culture and way of life of Badagry indigenes. Despite these differences, children find it easy to mingle and interact with their peers, especially during play, which is a major feature of early childhood development. Children benefit from symbolic, physical, social, and constructive play to enhance their cognitive development, emotional growth, and social skills. So, play is significant in a child's all-around health and development. Children play 'based on a friendly and secure environment' (Majumdar, 2020). This study recognizes the important role of play between children from different cultures and indigenous children in the social sphere, especially in school environments, which appears to be a meeting ground for diverse groups. These children spend more than half of their active period during the day in school. Hence, the school environment is a major place of socialization and interaction for them. They learn to accept, accommodate, empathise, and identify with other children who are not within their cultural space, and also learn to cope with issues necessitated by cultural differences. The ability of children of 'other cultures' to cope in a new environment creates an inclusive space for them within the society where they have been relocated.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Norms Theory (Late 19th Century to Early 20th Century)

Cultural norms theory is a synthesis of ideas and contributions from various scholars and cannot be attributed to a single researcher. However, Emile Durkheim, an anthropologist, extensively explored the role of social norms in creating a balance in social order by assigning meanings to cultural symbols. Some of his major works on cultural norms include *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), *Suicide* (1897) and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1923). Durkheim's view on cultural norms is an emergent web of representations holistically encompassing the deep-set values, beliefs, and symbolic system of a natural collectivity, such as the tribal societies to which he gave such close attention (Lincoln, 2004, p. 4). Durkheim stressed "collective consciousness" (norms, beliefs, and values) as the yardstick for moral basis and social integration. To him, there must be reaccepted limits to individual behaviours that may be termed deviant' in society. This theory suggests unwritten societal rules that prescribe people's behaviours in different situations and what is acceptable (Yadov, 2023).

This theory posits that a thorough understanding of cultural norms influences both individual and collective behaviour. These cultural norms encompass values, practices, and traditions that shape behavioural patterns and social interactions within a society. The theory posits that cultural norms are a determinant in shaping perceptions and reactions to various situations, as well as the extent to which social roles and behaviours are accepted. The ability of individuals to conform to these norms serves as a yardstick for social acceptance, peaceful coexistence, stability, continuity, and the absence of conflict. Integrating cultural norms theory into educational practice enhances a conducive learning environment where all students feel accepted, valued, and supported. It is a means of establishing equitable and inclusive educational experiences, particularly for children experiencing cultural differences. This interaction, which involves creating inclusive spaces in schools, highlights the importance of integrating diverse cultural practices into the school environment.

This theory is complementary to this research in three major perspectives. First, this theory aims to create awareness among schools to understand diverse cultural norms and accommodate students from other cultural backgrounds. This helps in recognizing various values and ways in which students differ and their reactions when they interact, communicate, or are integrated into a new culture. Secondly, cultural norms theory gives insights into societies to identify and address unnecessary biases and apathy that may exist. Cultural assumptions will be addressed to give room to cultural expressions and traditions. This will aid societies in developing inclusive policies and practices that will make the environment warm, welcoming, and conducive. Thirdly, this theory will serve as a springboard to promote unity and oneness, where diversity is well understood and respected, thereby reducing individualism and fostering corporate existence. Apart from shaping behaviour, it will foster mutual respect among children, and this is essential for social cohesion to reduce conflict. This is germane at this point in Nigeria, where ethnicity and tribalism have permeated all sectors, bearing negative consequences on the fabric of society.

Objectives of the study

This paper aims to explore the significance of inclusive spaces and address the challenges of inclusion as a means of enhancing the experiences of children from other cultures in a new environment. To achieve this, the need for an inclusive space would be interrogated to

deduce its meaning and acknowledge the diversity, as well as approaches to fully interface with the existing culture of the new society that children live in. The preoccupation at this stage is to launch inclusive spaces for children of other cultures in their immediate societies by creating awareness. This is targeted at cultivating their consciousness, roles, contributions, and engagements in addressing cultural diversities and entrenching cultural integration. It will pursue the need for adequate preparedness for children through deliberate transmission of information to enlighten, educate, and create awareness for establishing inclusion, particularly in Lagos State, and by implication, Nigeria. It aims to create spaces where there will be cultural sensitivity and efforts to initiate inclusive policies in multicultural societies that will help to catalyze supportive and safe environments for children from other cultures. It is upon these premises that this study is anchored to probe the views and opinions of students from different cultures on inclusion and the process of integrating into a multicultural setting.

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent are children aware of cultural diversity in their society?

RQ2: How can language inhibit inclusion in multicultural societies?

RQ3: What aspects of culture can promote inclusive spaces for children?

Methodology

A quantitative and qualitative approach is adopted for this research. Data was generated from questionnaires, administered to students in selected junior secondary schools. Also, a focus group discussion was held, comprising both indigenous and non-indigenous children in the same school environment. This research is in three phases, and this is the first phase. The first phase, which is the outcome of this research, is to find out from students their views on aspects of the interference of their cultures with that of the societies and also decipher the extent of cultural integration. Questionnaires were administered to students in junior secondary schools in Badagry Local Government Area. A simple percentage was used for data gathering to arrive at the analysis, while an observation method was adopted for a guided participant-oriented Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Based on this method, the study examines perceptions and shared experiences of students regarding their efforts to integrate into a multicultural society in their new environment, and the process of integrating into a multicultural setting.

Population of the study

The research is delimited to Junior Secondary School students randomly selected from JSS1 to JSS 111 in select primary schools for the study in Badagry Local Government, Lagos State, Nigeria. The population of the study consists of eighty (80) students from four (4) Junior Secondary Schools (JSS 1 to JSS 3) who provided information for the questionnaire. The respondents, who were non-indigenes of Lagos State, were randomly selected to comprise twenty (20) students from each school, from JSS 1- JSS 11 classes. Due consideration was given to gender balance by ensuring the population for each school is made up of ten (10) males and (10) females. In all, forty (40) males and forty (40) females took part in the study. Respondents are from the South-West, South-East, and North-Eastern States of Nigeria. For the focus group discussion, twenty (20) children were randomly selected with different cultural backgrounds, comprising ten (10) males and ten (10) females. Participants for the focus group discussion were drawn from one school in the Badagry Local Government Area. This brings the total population of respondents to one hundred (100).

Instrument and instrumentation

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. Respondents ticked either Yes or No to ten (10) items to provide answers to questions raised. The hard copy of the questionnaire was taken to selected junior secondary schools and administered to randomly selected pupils from 'other cultures'. The instrument was in two sections. Section A was meant to elicit information from respondents about the name of schools, classes, age, gender, place of birth, state of origin, tribe, and parents' occupation, while Section B contained ten (10) items which respondents ticked either Yes or No as it applies to them.

Analysis of Data and Discussion

The data for this research were gathered from both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the qualitative approach, data will be analysed based on responses from the questionnaire distributed to school children involved in the research. Additionally, data were collected through group discussions, utilising the observation method and guided participation of school children, who formed the study's population.

The first four items in the questionnaire addressed the cultural awareness of children of 'other cultures' in their environment. The items sought to inquire into the extent to which these children are aware of cultural diversities in the school environment, which is a major avenue for socialization for children. A significant number of children, amounting to 71.25% are aware that other languages exist apart from their native languages. Also, 57.5% of respondents claim that indigenes who are students ridicule aspects of their cultures. 51.25% are attracted to most aspects of Lagos culture, while 52.5% do not agree that there are similarities between their cultures and that of Lagos culture. Cultural awareness and integration of children in multicultural societies are expected to shape identities, enhance social cohesion, and foster supportive learning environments. Although migrant children are aware of other cultures in the school environment, they have self-imposed inhibitions and restrictions on cultural integration due to the non-acceptance of parts of their cultures by host communities. From these responses, multiple cultural identities are segregated, thereby linked with poor integration. Kramer's cultural fusion theory encourages mutual intercultural transformation between the newcomer and host culture. This is expected to evolve through communicative exchanges that will promote hybrid identities (Kramer, 2017). The assertion by Collier and Thomas (1980) that identity is fluid and emerges through symbols, norms, and social interactions, rather than being fixed traits, is properly situated in this context. These findings also explain the reason for migrant's children's lack of interest, impassivity, and detachment from imbibing Lagos culture. This is a poor prognosis for inclusivity and could lead to discrimination based on ethnicity.

Three items from the questionnaire address language as a major factor that could impact cultural inclusion. This study highlights a bias underscored by the apathy of respondents in communicating the native language of the society. Language is defined as 'a system of social conventions that specify particular relationships between a set of ideas' (Charles-Zalakoro, 2019). This situates language as strategic to cultural practices. In fact, culture is transmitted via language and this could be verbal or non-verbal. There is a symbiotic relationship between language and cultural transmission that makes it central as a symbol of identity. Culture is passed down through features such as codes, symbols, and sounds, from one generation to another or a group of people.

Most importantly, language symbolizes cultural identity. This interference is the reason why 56.25% of respondents would rather communicate in their own language rather than the language of the society while in school. This creates a language barrier for their children

while they are in school and could contribute to their apathy towards cultural integration. This would reduce effective communication and mutual understanding, which are germane for inclusive spaces. This is an affirmation of Mohamed's view that migrants in another community with a different language from their own prefer to use their mother tongue to communicate with each other as a means of expressing their cultural solidarity, cultural preservation, and identity (Mohamed, 2017). Despite this discovery, 66.25% of respondents indicated interest in learning Ogu and Awori languages, while 65.34% respondents also wished that the indigenes who are students learn to speak their languages too. In support of these findings, Charles-Zalakoro (2019) asserts that the acquisition of another language creates opportunities to become part of a new group in another community and fosters an interest in identifying and embracing a different culture. Also, children in host communities should reciprocate this gesture by interacting with children of other cultures. This, therefore, indicates that respondents are ready to integrate into the culture of their immediate environment. Through this act, migrant children are ready to explore and discover a new cultural framework while inviting indigenes to also navigate their cultural terrain for proper integration

Guided by the last three items in the questionnaire, respondents remain fully connected to their cultures and make minimal efforts to integrate into Lagos culture. 68.75% are not interested in attending festivals and events with customary tendencies. Also, 77.5% respondents do not know or narrate stories about the origin of Lagos. This suggests that respondents are indifferent to their multicultural setting; instead, they have retained their cultural identities, thereby making cultural integration difficult. However, it is encouraging that despite all inhibitions discovered in this study, a large percentage, 91.25% of respondents, are familiar with the cuisine and delicacies of Lagos and have tasted them before. This is a major landmark for inclusivity. Having a feeling of acceptability is an assurance of future integration and interaction on a larger scale. On the other hand, this also implies that Lagos indigenes (students) are warm, receptive, and accommodating to migrants. What is currently lacking is preparedness, synergy, trust, reliability, and respect from both parties. Responses here suggest that students have been able to recognize diversity in culture and are gradually accepting the new culture.

Findings

A major finding of this research is that the school environment is a major ground for socialization and appreciation of cultural diversity. It serves as a medium to foster a sense of belonging, promote meaningful understanding, encourage acceptability, inclusion practices, and cultural exchange. The findings of this study have provided background information that there is reduced cultural engagement and interaction between indigene and non-indigene children. This resulted in minimal participation and involvement of migrated children in social activities in the communities. These activities include participation in dances, drumming and festivals, such as Egungun, which is predominant in Badagry and its environs. Reasons for this are not far-fetched. Parental influence and religious beliefs pose as a hindrance to this and portray a feeling of isolation, marginalization, and social exclusion. Although not concrete, it can be inferred that migrant students may experience inequalities and unequal access to opportunities and resources because of these inhibitions. Another major discovery is that migrated children have not intensified their efforts to integrate into their new societies, although they are familiar with certain aspects, such as food, songs, and dressing. This could be attributed to apathy, prejudices, bias, and religious inclinations. The study highlights a lack of inclusivity that

could lead to stereotyping and/or exclusion. Fortunately, there is undeniable and vast evidence of acceptability, which eliminates threats and insecurity from host communities.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the experiences of cultural integration of migrant children within the Junior Secondary Schools in Badagry and Lagos State, and the challenges and opportunities they are exposed to in the process of adapting to a new cultural environment. The results showed an intricate interaction between cultural awareness, language preferences, social integration and retaining cultural identity. Although the migrant children in this research had a high rate of cultural diversity awareness in their new world, they were also exposed to major challenges, especially in the language barrier and socialization. It was found that migrant children were mostly cognizant of the multicultural characteristics of their surroundings and were interested in interacting with the host culture. Nonetheless, the refusal to adopt fully the cultural practices of the host society, especially with regard to attending the local festivals, brought out the conflict between cultural preservation and integration. The major factor that was found to be a barrier to integration was language, where most migrant children preferred to speak their native languages, hence posing problems in communication and socialization with their peers. The incidents of mockery and discrimination that quite a large number of the respondents indicated clearly pointed out the existence of prejudices that continue to impede the complete socialization of migrant children into their new societies. Irrespective of these issues, positive signs of cultural integration were also identified in the study. Most of the migrant children demonstrated interest to learn about Lagos culture and were willing to learn the native languages of the host society. In addition, the cultural familiarity with local food and cuisine was also a major point of cultural exchange that offered a means through which the migrant children could integrate with their new surroundings without putting their cultural identities at stake. The results indicate that barriers to integration do exist, but it is possible to design inclusive spaces that allow intercultural exchange and give migrant children a sense of belonging.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it is possible to give several recommendations to facilitate the cultural integration of migrant children in Badagry and other multicultural communities:

Promotion of Cultural Awareness and Education

There is a need to introduce cultural awareness and understanding programs in schools. Such programs ought to aim at educating both the migrant and the host community children on the fact that there are various cultures and that they need to respect and value other people because of their cultural differences. Students should be given the opportunity to share and celebrate their cultural traditions in school, so that they do not fear or mock diversity, but instead live in a world where they embrace it.

Language Support Programs

In this research, language was identified as one of the key barriers to integration since the majority of migrating children prefer using their languages over the host community language. It is recommended that schools create language support programmes, which could help migrant children master the dominant language better, and which will allow them to retain their native languages and promote their celebration. Bilingual education programmes are beneficial in raising academic performance and in preserving cultural identities. These programs can assist the migrant children to talk to their peers better and feel more a part of the school life.

Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Bullying Policies

The described episodes of ridicule and discrimination by migrant children emphasize the relevance of the schools having more anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies. The role of such policies is to promote inclusiveness and equity, whereby every child, regardless of his or her cultural background, should feel secure and welcomed in a school environment. The teachers and other school staff need to be ready to recognize and take vigorous actions against discriminatory acts to ensure that the migrant child is instilled with a good environment. This is a necessity in dealing with prejudice in school to facilitate an inclusive and harmonious educational environment.

Encouraging Participation in Local Cultural Practices

Even though the majority of the migrant children were not eager to participate in the local events and festivals, prompting them to do so in a less formal manner could be successful. The schools can offer migrant children an opportunity to discover and participate in the cultural activities gradually by initiating cultural exchange days or common experience-based workshops. These activities would allow the students to become acquainted with the host culture in a non-threatening way and reduce the fear of losing their cultural identity, as well as encourage integration. These opportunities may also assist in promoting intercultural competence to ensure that children feel more comfortable in their new social environment.

Fostering Intercultural Friendships and Peer Mentorship

Among the effective measures that can be employed to promote the integration of culture among migrant children is the need to persuade the migrant children to make friends with other children of the host country. The introduction of peer mentorship programmes is one of the changes that schools should implement, whereby the older students who are migrants and the older students who constitute the hosts are paired to mentor younger students. This would provide the migrant children with the feeling of a support system that will help them navigate through social and academic challenges and make intercultural friends.

Integration of Cultural Diversity into the Curriculum

Lastly, the schools should include cultural diversity in the curriculum by including materials and resources that reflect the experiences of the migrant children. This can include literature, history, social studies and creative and cultural studies subjects that acknowledge and celebrate the cultures of the migrant groups. It is possible to legitimize the experience of migrant children by making the curriculum more inclusive so that the voices of other people are heard.

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