

Deters, F. P. (2009). *Identity, agency, and the acquisition of professional language and culture: The case of internationally educated teachers and college professors in Ontario*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto.

Resource Focus

Research

- Native English speaking teachers (NESTs) and Non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs)
- Internationally educated teachers (IETs)/ Immigrant teachers
- Immigration
- Employment and labour market
- Credentialing and licensure

Country Context: Canada

Resource Type

- Other: dissertation

Intended Audience

- Policy makers
- Researchers
- Teacher educators
- Internationally educated professionals
- Teachers (K-12 and adult)
- General public

Summary of content / Abstract

With globalization and the ever-increasing migration of professionals, issues related to learning an additional language and culture for professional contexts are prominent in many immigrant-receiving societies. This study examines the professional acculturation experiences of internationally educated teachers (IETs) in the English public Kindergarten-to-Grade-12 and college systems in Ontario, Canada. The research questions focus on the affordances and constraints to successful professional acculturation, and on the relationships between identity, agency, and the acquisition of professional language and culture.

Data for this qualitative study comprise in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 33 IETs from diverse ethnolinguistic and professional backgrounds, longitudinal case studies of 8 of these IETs, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 15 educational professionals who work with IETs, namely, administrators, mentors, and professional development facilitators. All textual data were coded for content using ATLAS.ti software. My analysis is informed by Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) sociocultural theory and Lave and Wenger's (1991; 1998) concept of legitimate peripheral participation and community of practice (COP) framework.

The findings are reported in three sections. First, dominant themes regarding affordances and constraints to professional acculturation are identified from the complete data set. Main constraints are differences in language and culture, interaction with students and parents, differences in teaching and learning styles, and discrimination. Key affordances are social support, recourse, observation and practice, and beliefs. Second, findings and analysis of retrospective narratives of 3 IETs who were able to acquire an additional language and culture,

and achieve professional success are discussed. Third, I focus on a longitudinal case study of one IET. The finds highlight the complex and dynamic relationships between individuals- with their sociocultural histories, identities, and beliefs – and the norms of the receiving COP. Recurring themes include the socially constructed nature of identity and agency, the key roles of power relations and emotions, the importance of community acceptance and support, and the two-way process of change and transformation as a newcomer enters a COP. Implications regarding strategies for professional acculturation success include the need for immigrant professionals to have access to and to be affirmed and accepted by a COP.

Reviews available (if available)

This is comprehensive and easy-to-read dissertation on IETs. Using the framework of COP and the concept of agency, it shows how important it is to allow IETs to have access to a COP, where they are given technical support like credentialing, or information of the local education system, and to be accepted by the COP which recognizes their strengths and contribution rather than just highlighting their deficiency. One powerful point made is that professional acculturation is a two-way process which involves the willingness of both the newcomer to learn and change, and the receiving COP to accept and change as well. The research helps inform policy makers, teacher educators and school administrators of how they can best support the IETs.