Teacher Educations:

not Only Concerned
for Curricula Implementations

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Ethiopian Teacher Facing Latent Racism

A B S T R A C T : This study explores the challenges faced by minority-group teachers, Ethiopian teachers in Israel. the aim of this study is to highlight two questions: what the teachers say about their experiences facing latent racism and discrimination in the education system, and how Ethiopian teachers react to their experience of latent racism. A qualitative approach was used for this research via the narrative-inquiry methodology. Fourteen veteran Ethiopian Israeli teachers were interviewed. Findings show that most of the interviewees felt latent racism but did not complain or make any explicit statements about experiencing racism. Findings show, furthermore, that experience of "latent racism" is blurred on both sides, allowing the parties to be unaware of it and avoid confronting it. The contribution of this research lies in achieving a better understanding of the complexity of responses that refer to "latent racism," especially in the educational system.

K E Y W O R D S : Immigrant teachers, narrative, racism.

Theoretical Background

Discrimination and Racism Against Teachers in the Education System

Racism and discrimination are social phenomena that are studied from different psychological, sociological, economic and political perspectives.

Latent racism and discrimination or exposed racism and discrimination, both are a reflection of the society in which educational frameworks exist.

Racism, as defined by Hussain (2023), involves the subordination of individuals or groups based on physically distinctive characteristics, permeating various aspects of socio-economic and political life. Discrimination, on the

other hand, signifies unequal treatment based on group membership rather than inherent qualities, ranging from minor to severe actions within dominant-subordinate group dynamics.

Hussain's study explores policy efforts to combat racism and discrimination in higher education institutions in Canada. Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides insights, emphasizing a multidimensional and intersectional analysis of discrimination.

In international schools, Black teachers, as reported by Washington (2023), encounter the silent code of racism and prejudiced beliefs. Discriminatory practices in hiring, interviewing, and promotion processes contribute to adverse effects on job satisfaction and psychological well-being. The lack of diversity in leadership exacerbates these challenges. In addition, Rodriguez et al. (2023) delve into microaggressions faced by international students in the U.S., emphasizing the need for opportunities to break down cultural and racial barriers. There is a consensus among researchers that post-migration discriminatory attitudes heighten the harmful impact of racial microaggressions on the mental well-being and inclusion of migrants and refugees (Quassoli & Colombo, 2023).

Baker et al.'s (2023) systematic review underscores the ordinary and institutional nature of racism, affecting rural educational settings. Bradley (2022) explores the unique challenges faced by Black male teachers, leading to the formation of affinity groups for support, and identifies systemic racism as a crucial factor influencing career decisions.

Black male elementary educators face discrimination based on race and gender. Despite their resilience, experiences of discrimination persist, often overlooked or ignored by school administrators. The educators employ various strategies, including academic pursuits and personal research, to combat discrimination (Wallace, 2023).

Collectively, these studies highlight the multifaceted nature of discrimination and racism against teachers in the education system. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policy changes, a commitment to inclusiveness, and sustained efforts to create environments that value and support the diverse experiences of educators.

Immigrant and Minority-Group Teachers and Their Challenges

Immigrant teachers from around the world and Israel contribute to multicultural education and school integration of students from immigrant families. These teachers possess intercultural competences and are more sensitive to the issues faced by minority groups due to their migration experiences.

However, they encouter various obstacles. One major issue is recognition of previous professional qualifications and experience (Bense, 2016). Barriers to re-entering their profession, including language barriers and a lack of formal recognition, keep them under constant pressure (Proyer et al., 2022).

Immigrant teachers and, in particular, teachers from Africa experience racial discrimination in the education system. Although immigrant African teachers are well qualified, they are not promoted like their colleagues, and they are discriminated against in the amount of salary that they earn (Ironsi, 2021). Immigrant teachers of color are widely intimidated by the higher-education system since they have not developed the required skills to succeed in the academic environment. Therefore, it is important to create curriculums for them that are based on their personal strengths rather than on typical academic standards (McDevitt, 2021). Immigrant teachers struggle constantly for acceptance and appreciation. Additionally, they feel isolated, since they have no one with whom to share their success stories or on whom to depend in times of crisis. Their attempts to bridge the cultural gap sometimes lead to feelings of discomfort and incompetence (Yan, 2021). It was found that when teachers with migration-related resources suffer from latent fragility, they cannot fully realize their potential (Mantel, 2022).

The most prominent challenges that immigrant teachers in New Zealand face are personal challenges due to prejudices against them (Jhagroo, 2016). Yan (2020) created a conceptual framework that describes the multidimensional relationship between his expectations and experiences as a migrant teacher in New Zealand. Throughout his transnational life, he developed multiple identities, resulting in a binary sense of either fulfillment or disappointment.

In Israel, it has been found that the way Ethiopian Israeli teachers experience their life at school is significantly influenced by their cultural interaction. In other words, professional teaching cannot be separated from personal cultural background (Avissar, 2022).

This creates two channels of experience, the need for a sense of belonging – the need be a part of a group and to be accepted professionally as a person (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Kalinsky, 2014). In trying to acclimate to a new environment, minority teachers, who are immersed in their foreign (native?) culture, may experience a culture shock (Romig, 2009). Their ethnic background may be dissociated later on through strategies that they adopt (Strasser & Waburg, 2015). Moreover, both immigrant and local Israeli teachers recognize that learning about each other's culture not only benefits them both, but also affects their perceptions and understanding of each other's culture (Jayusi & Bekerman, 2020).

The Integration of Ethiopians in Israel

The Ethiopian Jewish community has preserved its Judaism for thousands of years, even in periods of religious persecution. They lived mainly in rural areas in the northern provinces of Ethiopia, many of them around the city of Gondar, the former capital of Ethiopia (Ehrlich, 2007).

The main waves of immigration from Ethiopia to Israel were enabled by dramatic airlift operations known as Operation Moses (1984) and Operation Solomon (1991). Thereafter, immigrants from Ethiopia continued to arrive in Israel in smaller groups, and they have lived since then mainly in peripheral areas of Israel. At the end of 2022, the Ethiopian Israeli community of immigrants and their offspring numbered approximately 169,000 individuals and constituted about 1.7% of the Israeli population (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

Ethiopian Israelis experience ongoing discrimination based on race, which is reflected in the attitude of the majority group, difficulties in integrating into workplaces, and social under-representation. In an attempt to find a solution to this discrimination, the Israeli government launched a multi-system process for the optimal integration of Ethiopian immigrants, a process known as the "New Way," in 2014. This plan created practical social programs to correct the situation, which took the following measures: discontinuing segregated programs, providing individualized approaches and emphasis on excellence, providing adequate representation in Academia and key positions, and strengthening trust between the police force and Ethiopian Israelis (Hatseyet Lemigur Hagiz'anut Neged Yotse'e 'etyopya, 2016).

In academic institutions as well, there is considerable under-representation of Ethiopian Israelis: despite the fact that, over the past two decades, the number of Ethiopian Israeli students has increased significantly, they constitute only 1.2% of all students (Knesset Research and Information Center, 2018). The scholastic achievements of Ethiopian Israelis who apply to academic institutions in Israel may be influenced by cultural characteristics that make it difficult for them to meet the threshold requirements for acceptance to these institutions (Kalnisky & Brenner, 2016). Nonetheless, analysis according to the "learning-from-success" method reveals that retention, decisiveness, ambition, and the support of friends and family promote successful integration (Ben Simon et al., 2019).

In teacher education institutions a program was established for Ethiopian Israelis who aspire to become teachers. This was an integrated program, open to all studies wishing to extend their studies. The aim of the program was

expanding the representation of the Ethiopian community's members in the educational system. The program was named "Tasfah", which means "hope" in Amharic. About 800 teachers have been absorbed into the education system from this program (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020).

Most Ethiopian Israeli students and teachers serve as agents for cultural integration and change. To be successful, they must deal with the clash between traditional Ethiopian perceptions and the demands of the Western labor market using various strategies. Working in the education system leads to more interaction and influence in mainstream society (Yassour-Borochowitz & Wasserman, 2020).

Methodology

Paradigm

A qualitative approach was used for this research via the narrative-inquiry methodology. The stories of Ethiopian-Israeli teachers were analyzed to understand their subjective experiences. This methodology was chosen because of its effectiveness in enabling researchers to understand the participants' personal account of their process of integration (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Fourteen veteran Ethiopian Israeli teachers were interviewed in two stages. The interviewees were first asked open questions about their life stories, starting from their decision to study teaching up until the present time. They were allowed to tell their stories with no interruption (Josselson, 2013). Next, they were asked in-depth questions about their stories. After the interviews, the researchers isolated the sections of the stories ("mini-narratives") dealing with their experience of racism or discrimination. Their stories were analyzed from a holistic perspective, as is required in the narrative paradigm (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Participants

The research participants consisted of 14 teachers, 11 female and 3 male. Most of the participants had been working as teachers for 5 to 10 years at the time when the research was conducted, except for one participant who had been a teacher for only 4 years. Six participants had immigrated to Israel over the age of 8 ("first-and-a-half generation" immigrants), six others had immigrated under the age of 7, and two were born in Israel after the immigration of their parents ("second generation" immigrants) (Lev-Ari, 2010). Ten participants had a Master's degree. Three participants had begun teaching as soon as they received their degrees. All of the interviewees were aged between 30 and 49.

Research Process

The participants worked as teachers at schools across Israel. They were recruited in two ways: first, a letter of invitation to participate in the research was sent to them. The letter was sent to approximately 50 Ethiopian Israelis who had studied teaching between 6–8 years previously. Secondly, the "snowball" method (Patton, 2002) was used to contact individuals who expressed interest in participating in the research. The participants were provided with information about the purpose of the research and the method that would be used.

The participants were also told that the narrative research method was chosen and that the interviews would be open but that their names would be changed to protect their privacy. They were asked for their consent to have the interviews recorded for the purpose of analyzing them as part of the research. They were asked where they would like to be interviewed. The options were to be interviewed at home, at their school, in some other place, or remotely. All the participants chose to be interviewed remotely. The interviews lasted between 1–2 hours and were fully transcribed.

Ethics and Reflection

The participants were guaranteed anonymity, and any identifying details were changed. The study received the approval of the ethics committee of the MOFET Institute (No.: RB2110PD). The participants signed an informed consent form. Each of the researchers read the mini-narratives about the parents separately. Each of the researchers identified the message (end point) in each narrative. The researchers met to discuss and determine the central themes together.

Findings

Racism and Discrimination: Moving Between the Hidden and the Visible

We will present below how the interviewees reported being exposed to racism and discrimination. We will then examine how they handle the revelations of discrimination.

Discrimination Feelings

The participants reported enduring racist or discriminatory attitudes mainly when describing their first encounters with the educational system.

The events were characterized as "latent racism". Whether applying for jobs or meeting with students, colleagues, or parents, this is manifested.

Anonymity is a characteristic of the initial meetings. In this interaction, individuals do not know one another and so are regarded as representative meetings of groups. As a result, they do not feel that they are considered individuals, but rather part of a stereotypical social group that represents Ethiopian society.

The meeting was described by Shaul, who is looking for a job:

> *I tried to search… I submitted a resume and then… I started there for a period of several months as a substitute…They also gave me a group through a project outside of school. I said maybe through this they'll get to know me and I will connect.*

Latent racism manifests itself through the organization's rejection of him "back and forth", without explanation. His insistence leads to his starting work. It is clear to the narrator that there isa latent racism at work here, but he does not give up.

Also, Yael outlines the hidden discrimination experienced by members of marginalized communities in looking for a job:

> *When I finished my studies, I started going to all kinds of schools. There were times when they said, "We don't need anyone.". I told them okay, but if you need to fill in a place or something I will also want it so that it will broaden my experience [and they said] well, we see, fine, I don't need the resume, all kinds of statements like that, you say wow, why?*

Although the rejection is not explicitly stated, the reference to the resume indicates disdain. There is often mistrust even when there is a positive attitude, due to stereotypes about the applicant, as Mahanet describes.

> *And I want you to replace a science teacher. But you should know that the hours are not the Ministry of Education hours. I was wondering if this is a permanent teacher who has been teaching at the school for several years. I was wondering if it is possible that she teaches at such hours? Well, I said OK, what could be done, and I worked.*

In the story, Mahanet describes the process she went through and does not explicitly mention discrimination. The manager "exploits" the opportunity to save money by using the employment structure. Different employment structures are a form of latent racism. The teacher gets a job, but she is

employed under different conditions. Cultural-social-economic equality of opportunity is inaccessible to teachers from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Although she realizes the reality, she chooses not to confront the manager.

The initial meeting with the students was also characterized by latent racism. Mulu shares insights from the class. She recognizes the children's messages and handles the incident:

> *I began teaching the lesson. Then they began to giggle among themselves. I told them – what do you think? I didn't introduce myself enough at the beginning of the year. And I told them who I was, and they asked me questions. I gave it a platform. And I asked them what they wanted to do, why it was so important for them to be in an excellence class and to succeed, and then some of them said to me that they really wanted to be accepted into the reserve, and I informed them that I knew this track, and little by little that's how most of the time of the class passed in conversation, but I think it also broke the ice between us.*

Her awareness of the stereotypical perception that children possibly have of her because of the color of her skin leads her to open discussion. Mulu tells them about her professional background, not her personal background. At first sight they don't trust her, but she teaches them to look beyond appearances. The students only see her "from the outside" and she allows them to look "inside" at themselves. With the aim of dealing with racist stereotypes, she teaches them to change their gaze from the "outside" to the "inside."

Parents' attitudes are reflected in the discourse of students. On behalf of their parents, they present a latent racist position to the teacher:

> *When I first started teaching, a student came to me and asked, 'Did you learn that?', I asked, do you think I'll learn without experiencing anything before? So he said to me: 'My mother questioned me how the lecturers are doing? I told her I have an Ethiopian lecturer. So she told me to ask you if he is a practitioner or teacher? I told him, "I have certificates and I will show you," so he was ashamed, he told me no, don't show me. Then I told him that it is all right, because your mother isn't used to it, and because she sees us as newly arrived immigrants, so she thought I was a new immigrant. Tell her that I am not a new immigrant, and I will send her the certificates if she wants them.*

David describes a dialogue with a student who "mobilizes" not only his own position, but what his parents think of a teacher who is part of the Ethiopian community. A parent, representing the Israeli society, treats a community member as an uneducated, immigrant. In other words, the story describes the portrayal of two groups during a meeting, "white veterans" and

"community members". He is not offended and explains the logic behind these perceptions; he understands that, seen through the eyes of veteran Israelis, they are indeed new immigrants. The response that education is one of the most essential elements of integration into society stands out in his words. In order to change the image, it is necessary to acquire education. In David's story, the meeting with the parents is conducted through the student. Typically, the meeting with parents takes place during parent meetings, as in Worseness's narrative:

> *I remember the first parents' meeting as an educator. I was extremely excited about this meeting. And parents came in and were amazed, asking where is the teacher? All kinds of statements were made because the parent was surprised to see an Ethiopian…*

In the initial encounter between the Ethiopian teacher and the parents, without interpersonal acquaintance, the "outside" – the "external appearance" – takes precedence over the "other". A meeting with "external appearance" exposes "overt racism" – they ask "where is the teacher?" An Ethiopian, supposedly, is not a teacher. Racial discrimination is characterized by group attributions to appearance, without regard for the individual.

Reactions and Interpretation of Discriminatory Treatment: A Vague Recognition

The experience of racism or discrimination in the teachers' narratives is not defined, it is blurred or avoided. The reasons for these reactions are varied. Shira refers to the fact that she is often asked about this matter: *'Every time I am asked if I have experienced racism in my life. So, I don't know if I have experienced racism. It is not….'* She describes her difference from the majority society, which is expressed openly, in skin color and culture, and it seems she accepts the reality.

The recognition of the striking external difference is an attempt to attenuate the events even though the teachers experience them deeply. In interviews, they obscure the events and the response to them is that "the burden of proof is on me". Shani told:

> *I guess I am the first Black teacher they have had who educates their children. But I also think that many times the burden of proof is on me. They see me as I am. I'm the educator, they can like it or not like it, that's what it is. But I understand that they are checking me or… they say 'I wonder what she will be like', they are so surprised.*

Another response, in a similar vein, is Shaul's: after his application for a teaching job that was rejected, he insisted, and accepted a job on an external project. *You are nobody but… but always, … you will serve as an example to the public…*

Shaul and other participants recognize discrimination, others' behavior towards them. He declares that he "does not blame" bigots. He takes on responsibility for the "burden of proof"; in this sense, the position he holds is ambivalent and helps him be instrumental. He acknowledges the difficulties; he reacts with tolerance and adopts a defensive and professional survival position. Although they "give up on him", he does not give up on himself. He is ready to ignore discrimination, take responsibility and demand the best.

Mulu initially describes a professional reception as a "love story" but later recognizes its complex layers. Her reaction acknowledges the social images of community members and distances personal injury as a reading of social reality: "*I don't take it personally, I know the complexity… I really believe there will be a change*".

The blurring of racism's experience is also reflected in Yael's inner discourse:

> *I never felt like I experienced racism… the discourse was not in our house. I'm even sure there were many cases, but I didn't give it any meaning, a place. They would call us a Negro in the neighborhood, they would say many things to us, it didn't bother me. We laughed about it. … and suddenly during this time at school as a teacher I felt that it overwhelmed me and I really wanted to cry* [laughter].

In Yael's words, a description of the process of internalizing racism in the human spirit is revealed. To all appearances, she did not attach any importance to this as a child, and even cooperated with the bigots. She laughed! Later on, when she experiences racism, she refrains from reacting actively but deeply experiences the difficult feelings racism creates. The attitude of outside society stands in contrast to the attitude of home and the environment closest to her. Racist attitudes can be offensive even many years later. She did not attribute any meaning to it as a child, but later, she described a deep pain.

Shira examines her reaction in front of colleagues in the profession and adds a layer to the variety of teachers' reactions to racism or discrimination.

> *I found it very difficult because I felt my friends didn't understand what I was saying here, you know. So that's it, so now I'm moving to another place, which is actually where, let's say, our color is more profitable.*

Shira took an active role in leaving the place that gave her a sense of racism and hidden discrimination. She knows reality must be changed, but her active coping strategy is to avoid changing her current place. Shira turns to find an alternative that will allow her to realize her skills and her way. That means connecting with a group of equals or similar members of the Ethiopian community.

Overall, there were no reactions of anger, aggression or defiance among the teachers to the encounter with racism and discrimination in the educational system. Also, the attitude towards them did not prevent them from continuing and integrating professionally. In the following section, we will discuss whether this matter has anything to do with the personality of the interviewees, the cultural patterns of the interviewees, or the strength of the attitude toward them.

Discussion and Conclusions

In recent years, all over the world, cultural transitions have become common. They influence different countries; populations are becoming more heterogeneous, and these processes are reflected in education systems. This article deals with Ethiopian teachers who made a cultural and social transition to the State of Israel.

The unique feature of this study is its focus on 14 Ethiopian teachers. Most research about multiculturalism in education relates to analyzing various aspects among learners, or expressions of multiculturalism in the field of curricula (Geiger, 2012). In this article, we examined teachers who represent minority culture in the education system (Gutman, 2023).

The purpose of this article is to examine the experience of racism and discrimination against Ethiopian teachers as they felt it (from their point of view). It also raises the question of how the Ethiopian teachers reacted to the phenomenon of racism – discrimination that they experienced.

Findings show that in the initial and subsequent meetings the experience of racist-discriminatory treatment exists. Interestingly, most of the interviewees did not make an explicit statement about experiencing racism, or resistance to the environment that expressed racism. Perhaps because "latent racism" leaves a void, whitewashes and dims the real experience.

Sometimes experiencing "latent racism" is more difficult. Those who create the "latent racism" and "given work" to Ethiopian teachers on projects or at lower wages quiet their consciences because they are ostensibly helping the victims, but at the same time they are giving them an illusion. Similarly, it

was found that African teachers are well qualified, but they are discriminated against in terms of salary (Ironsi, 2021). On the other hand, the Ethiopian teachers who experience this attitude of "latent racism" have no clear facts to hold onto in the blurry reality. The experience of "latent racism" is blurred on both sides and allows the parties to be unaware and avoid confronting it. Some studies among immigrant teachers show that Black teachers report encountering the silent code of racism and prejudiced beliefs. Discriminatory practices in hiring, interviewing, and promotion processes contribute to adverse effects on job satisfaction and psychological well-being (Washington, 2023).

Another significant insight that emerged from the findings relate to the processing of the Ethiopian teachers' responses. The responses included understanding that the teachers refrain from blaming either veteran Israelis or the environment and instead, assume responsibility for the situation. In this way, the respondents may have avoided confronting the harm done by "latent racism". They tend to see it as part of an encounter between groups rather than an accusation leveled at the individual. They tend to interpret the experiences of latent racism at the group level and try to detach themselves from the individual aspect.

We saw that Ethiopian-Israeli teachers unconsciously tell different stories when difficulties arise. They distinguish between the individual and the group (Schatz-Oppenheimer, & Kalnisky, 2014). As in this study, in the context of latent racism, teachers feel tension between the individual and their group of belonging. It seems that the interpretive response to the situations that create tension between the individual and the group also causes "blurred reactions". Perhaps it is precisely because of their personal pain that they are required to be protected. They set aside the meanings and interpretations of racism and blur the encounter with the discriminatory racist experience.

The results highlighted two significant aspects. Ethiopian teachers identify an attitude of latent racism towards them. They could describe the exact details, what they were wearing, where they placed the paper and what they were told exactly. But their responses tell a story of avoiding getting hurt by the discriminatory treatment. They recognize that this is the problem of the discriminating group, and they must act wisely in order to move forward professionally. They must prove their skills and abilities, thereby blurring their reactions and helping themselves to obscure the pain of the hidden racism they are experiencing.

Further studies can clarify the two issues that have arisen: what are the manifestations of latent racism and implicit discrimination in relationships in

educational systems, and how may we better understand the complexity of responses to latent racism. The importance of additional studies will make it possible to contribute to the eradication of latent racism in the educational system at all levels, from an organizational systemic perspective, from the perspective of interpersonal relationships in the educational institution. Most importantly, from the perspective of educating learners, is the prospect that the future generation will eschew discriminatory perceptions.

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