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Negotiating identities: experiences of rural migrant learners in an urban school in Johannesburg

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ABSTRACT

Due to the contextual difference between rural schools and urban school, many rural learners have migrated to urban schools. The rural population movement in the urban contexts has resulted in an increased number of rural learners in urban schools and also contributed in the diversity of cultures, ethnicities and races in urban schools making it difficult for teachers to respond to every learner's needs. This study hypothesises that rural learners are likely to face challenges in terms of inclusion and negotiating their identities in the new urban schools. This study describes the challenges faced by rural migrant learners in new urban school, and how these migrant learners construct their identities in the new urban context. The study focusses on one primary school in Johannesburg that has a large influx of rural learners over the years. Using the key concepts of social identity, social inclusion and social exclusion, this describes the lived experiences of migrated learners and how they negotiate their identities in a new urban context. Findings show that migrated learners face inclusive challenges both academically and socially and challenges in adapting to the new urban school environment. The factors that caused academic challenges were: language barrier, difficult subjects, and teachers' intervention. Social challenges were, adapting to a new environment, interacting with other learners and learning a new culture of the school.