

South African Teachers as Mobile Knowledge Workers in a Global Labour Market

Rian de Villiers

*Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20,
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
E-mail: Rian.deVilliers@up.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT Globally, the popularity of South African teachers is increasing. The recruitment of South African teachers has become an easy solution to fix a shortage of teachers in many industrialised countries. It is being speculated that the aggressive recruitment has a negative impact on South Africa as a source country. This theoretical study addresses South African teachers' motives for migration, marketing strategies of recruitment agencies, the implications for South African teachers due to the revised migration policies of the United Kingdom, and the impact of teacher migration on the South African education system. Career dissatisfaction, poor salaries and unemployment were identified as push factors. Higher salaries, international teaching experience, family or friends overseas, travel opportunities and recruitment agency persuasion were identified as pull factors. Recruitment agencies are using several methods to recruit teachers such as direct marketing activities on university campuses, online marketing, newspapers and magazines. Online 'pitching' to schools and teachers is discussed. It is predicted that South African teachers will seek greener pastures (especially the United Arab Emirates) due to the implementation of the recent United Kingdom Youth Mobility Scheme. South Africa's education system is being stifled by international recruitment. Huge loss of teachers to receiving countries has a serious negative impact upon the education system of South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

International migration has become a definite driver of development, person-to-person contact across countries and cultural interaction among different peoples from different regions and countries. Human mobility is one of the most significant development, domestic, and foreign policy issues in the world today. Many nations have, at one time or another and for diverse social, political and economic reasons, been affected by large movements of people from different points of origin. According to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) report (2009a), there are an estimated 200 million migrants working around the world today. They are sending home an estimated 300 billion dollars a year in remittances which is nearly three times the world's combined foreign-aid budgets. Global skilled migration is reshaping knowledge flows and knowledge diaspora becomes increasingly valuable in a context of globalisation as a transnational human capital. For the purpose of this article, I am focusing on teacher migration that crosses national borders and is motivated by teaching as a profession.

In 1994, South Africa held its first free elections and the country was welcomed back into the Commonwealth. It provided new opportu-

nities to South Africans – mainly those who were not entirely sure about their future. Emigration levels immediately increased. South Africa's spiralling crime rate, the crumbling infrastructure, the weakening of the Rand and the government's affirmative action quickly displaced political concerns and encouraged many South Africans to leave the country. Numerous South Africans emigrated between 1995 and 2005 with New Zealand, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) being the leading destinations. However, the most accessible and therefore the most popular destination for South African emigrants, including teachers, has been the UK. Till the end of 2008, before the UK Youth Mobility Scheme was implemented, the UK was the leading recruiting country of South African teachers. The recruitment of teachers from developing and/or other source countries has become a popular solution to fix a shortage of teachers in many industrialised, host countries, but at the cost of developing countries. In the UK, for example, the Office of National Statistics 2007 data (in Miller 2007) has revealed that during the period July 1997 to July 2006 the largest cohort of overseas trained teachers (10 474) arrived from South Africa. MacGregor (2008) reported that South Africa loses some 4 000 teachers a year to emigration. In 2004,

21 000 South African teachers left the country to teach abroad (Mulvaney 2006).

On the international level, UNESCO estimates that more or less 18 million new teachers are needed by 2015 to meet 'Education for All (EFA)' goals and ensure universal access to primary education for learners (pupils) in all countries in the world (AFT 2009a). These estimates are developed based on class size targets set for the developing world. However, international recruitment of teachers by industrial countries could undermine achievement of these goals. Teachers in developing countries leave areas already struggling to meet the EFA and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is not only newly qualified teachers who are recruited by foreign countries, but also the best and brightest teachers as well as those in subjects where there is a scarcity of teachers in scarce subjects. South Africa is one country that cannot afford to lose these teachers.

The Problem

Teaching is the largest single profession in South Africa with close to 412 000 teachers in public and independent schools. In 2009, there were almost 12 215 000 learners (pupils) in about 26 000 schools (Department of Education 2009). Teacher loss in South Africa might be conceptualised in mainly four dimensions: teacher attrition – due to death or to retirement, career change associated with teacher disaffection, and mass teacher recruitment to industrialised countries. Huge loss of teachers to receiving countries has a serious, negative impact upon the education system of most developing and/or source countries, including South Africa. Firstly, South Africa's education system is debilitated by international recruitment. Secondly, South Africa is funding the training of teachers who serve in other countries. Thirdly, international migration is leaving South Africa with insufficient teachers to staff its own education system. Fourthly, the loss of the most experienced and highly skilled teachers impacts greatly on learner outcomes and education quality. According to Regets (in Carm 2008), globally both source and receiving countries gain from migration, e.g. the emergence of a skilled and educated workforce, the creation and transfer of knowledge and the fostering of commercial ties.

The problem of South African teachers' migration leads to several key questions such as:

- What are South African teachers' motives for migration?
- What marketing strategies are recruitment agencies using?
- What are the implications for South African teachers with the implementation of the UK Youth Mobility scheme?
- What is the impact of teacher migration on the South African education system?

The structure what follows is made up of four sections. The first section addresses the reasons why South African teachers migrate to other countries. The second section deals with the global recruitment of teachers with the focus on South African teachers. This is followed by a view of the revision of UK migration policies and the direct implications it holds for South African teachers. The article concludes with a discussion on the impact teacher migration might have on the education system.

Motives for Migration

There are numerous of push and pull factors that cause people to relocate. According to the AFT report (2009a: 14), a push factor is "a force driving a person to consider leaving home" while a pull factor is "an enticement to select another place to live or work". For worker migration the following push factors are often identified: poor working conditions, family obligations, low compensation and benefits, graft and corruption, poor living conditions, political instability, no job security and not enough jobs. Pull factors as powerful motivators are classified as better working conditions, family ties, higher compensation and benefits, professional development interests, better living conditions, more political, economic and social stability, more job opportunities and a desire to see the world.

The following main push and pull factors as motives for South African teachers to migrate have been identified:

Push Factors

- Career dissatisfaction (Manik et al. 2006; Manik 2007, 2009)

- Poor salaries (De Villiers 2004; Ochs et al. 2008)
- Unemployment (Morgan et al. 2006)

Pull Factors

- Higher salaries (De Villiers 2004; Manik et al. 2006; Morgan et al. 2006; Bertram et al. 2007; Manik 2007)
- International teaching experience/professional development (De Villiers 2004; Morgan et al. 2006; Bertram et al. 2007; Manik 2007)
- Travel opportunities (De Villiers 2004; Morgan et al. 2006; Bertram et al. 2007; Manik 2007)
- Family/friends overseas (Morgan et al. 2006; Bertram et al. 2007)
- Recruitment agency persuasion (De Villiers and Books 2009; Manik 2009)

Edwards and Spreen (2007) contend that to a degree there is a 'mirror image' of push and pull, related to the career prospects, relative levels of pay, environment and working conditions available in both the source countries and in the destination countries.

RECRUITMENT OF OVERSEAS TRAINED TEACHERS

The international recruitment of teachers by countries of the developed world from developing countries has become a controversial aspect of the problem of teacher migration. Today, the teaching profession is beginning to feel the impact of globalisation in a new way. But how? According to the AFT report (2009a), the reserve pool of labour has become global, and employers are increasingly able to search on any continent for workers willing to accept the working conditions and wages on offer in their local communities. Globally, these recruitment practices have a potential impact on the quality of services provided in schools. For many years, the recruitment of overseas-trained teachers from Commonwealth countries to work in developed countries (especially the UK) has been at the heart of the debate about the migration of trained teachers amongst Commonwealth Education Ministers. They have argued that governments invest substantial amounts of money in training teachers only for them to be recruited to work abroad (Morgan et al. 2006).

Marketing Strategies of Recruitment Agencies

Recruitment agencies are using several methods to recruit teachers. A study undertaken by Mulvaney (2005) showed that the most effective marketing strategy was direct marketing activities on university campuses (40%), followed by advertising on the internet (29%), advertising in the local and regional newspapers (25%) and magazines (3%). The study by Ochs (2003) found that most of the teachers have been recruited by recruitment agencies, although some were recruited via telephone or directly by a school or by their friends. De Villiers (2004) and Mulvaney (2005) make the point that final year students who have no teaching experience have been recruited by recruitment agencies. Prospective teachers are being poached directly from university by recruitment agencies that lure them overseas with lucrative job offers. Recruitment on campuses has included everything from posted letters and pamphlets, posters in the cafeteria, to presentations on campuses. De Villiers and Books (2009) contend that the information sessions on campuses are generally very superficial. Prospective teachers therefore must rely on agencies' websites to obtain accurate and complete information before deciding to enter into an agreement. Globally, internet facilities and services are increasing. Today, online teacher-recruitment agencies are competing vigorously in a global marketplace to match schools' needs to 'cover' classes with young teachers' desires to spread their wings in new and exciting places. By all accounts, this industry is thriving, especially in large receiving countries like the UK and the US.

Schools need teachers who can do the job without causing problems or costing too much money. On the other hand, teachers want employment, preferably in schools that offer satisfaction or opportunities above and beyond the basic wages. Not surprisingly, therefore, many agencies invite teachers to imagine an exciting life outside the classroom and good pay, promise schools thorough vetting of candidates and low fees, and assure both customers that the agency can make the 'right' match. Few recruitment agencies require payment from both employer and employee, while most make their money from one source or the other. Many re-

recruitment agencies offer extra incentives – most of them commonly recommend a friend bonus, loyalty bonuses, or both. Other incentives include discount shopping cards or gift vouchers, free use of the internet or a travel agency, free Criminal Records Bureau checks, discounted insurance or free personal accident cover.

Recruitment Agencies and the Abuse of Migrant Teachers

The international recruitment process brings with it the potential for abuse of overseas-trained teachers. Some teacher recruitment agencies' unethical practices have been criticised by recruited teachers, schools, as well as the governments of both source and receiving countries (Curtis 2003). However, Degazon-Johnson (2009) mentions that some recruiters are honourable, provide what they promised, keep to their contractual obligations, and do not exploit those whom they recruit.

In most cases, many migrant teachers in the US have become victims of serious abuse by recruitment agencies. Recruitment agencies may mislead teachers by encouraging inaccurate and inflated expectations about life for those in the source countries because they have a financial interest in making the “pull” factors seem as tempting as possible. Potential recruits may learn of the comparatively high salaries they could earn, but on the other hand receive no information about income tax rates or the cost of living. They may also make their decisions to migrate without ever learning about the very different and difficult challenges of teaching in the most challenging US schools (AFT 2009a). It is documented that some recruiting agencies have intimidated teachers, misrepresented their pay, forced them into housing contracts, threatened to pull their visas, and charged them exorbitant fees for placements. Other recruiters have forbidden teachers to own cars, required teachers to take out loans with an effective annual interest rate of 60 percent, and placed teachers in overcrowded, unfinished housing (AFT 2009b). One Louisiana teacher, told a powerful tale of the abuse she and her fellow Filipinas suffered at the hands of one agency: “having to make huge up-front payments, having to pay additional fees once they were hired, living in substandard housing at inflated rental rates, and receiving persistent threats if

they raised any questions about their treatment” (AFT 2009c :1).

De Villiers (2007) notes that the vast majority of British recruitment agencies that recruited teachers in South Africa were guilty of gross unethical conduct. Teachers were not informed about the challenges waiting for them at typical inner-city London schools (Unknown 2005). The main criticisms concerned inadequate or no information on taxation, the cost of living, Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and differences between information received before and after arrival (Ochs 2003). Some migrant teachers reported feeling pressured by their recruitment agency to change to a different contract and even location once they arrived in the UK (Crace 2003). Some agencies didn't keep their promises to pick up the recruited teachers with their arrival in the UK – some teachers waited for up to two days at the airport! (personal communication with recruited teachers). Mulvaney (2005) found that slightly more than half (54%) of the teachers indicated that they were misled or not told the whole truth about conditions in the UK schools.

THE REVISING OF UK MIGRATION POLICIES

The introduction of the Points Based System (PBS) is part of the biggest shake-up to the UK immigration system in 45 years. This new tier system is managing migration for those wishing to enter the UK for study or work. It will tighten control against foreign workers who seek to abuse the system, while it will reinforce the UK's position as a destination of choice for foreigners. The system has also simplified the process of applying for a UK visa, restructuring more than 80 types of visa for UK immigration into a more transparent, straightforward system. This new system focuses the structure of UK immigration services into a five-tier immigration model. Five different categories were launched during 2008-2009 which includes Tier 1 for highly skilled migrants, entrepreneurs, investors and graduate students, Tier 2 for skilled workers with an offer of employment, Tier 3 for low-skilled workers to fill temporary shortages in the labour market, Tier 4 for students, and Tier 5 for youth mobility and temporary workers. Each tier will require the migrant to score a sufficient number of points to gain entry clear-

rance or extend his or her leave to remain in the UK.

The Implementation of the UK Youth Mobility Scheme

The Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) introduced by the UK Border Agency was launched worldwide on 27 November 2008 and replaces the ever popular Working Holidaymaker Visa (WHMV). The YMS is a cultural exchange scheme designed to create reciprocal youth mobility opportunities for young people from participating countries and the UK. The visa is designed for short-term exchanges and is issued for a maximum of two years. It will allow young people from participating countries to experience life in the UK while contributing to the economy by working and paying taxes. Australia, Canada, Japan and New Zealand are the only countries currently participating in the YMS because all have Deemed Sponsor status. All participating countries need to ensure that their country has accepted responsibility for their participating nationals and offer reciprocal youth mobility opportunities for UK citizens. South Africans are ineligible for the new Youth Mobility Scheme visa because, unfortunately, South Africa does not have such a reciprocal scheme. South Africa's Immigration Laws do not cater for temporary work options, and with South Africa's high unemployment rate, it is highly unlikely that such a reciprocal scheme would be introduced soon. Prospective migrants need to accrue 50 points under the UK Home Office's points-based system before applying for the YMS visa:

- 10 points if the applicant is between 18 and 30
- 10 points for having at least £1600 in the bank
- 30 points will be awarded for a certificate of sponsorship from the prospective migrant's home country (The new Points Based UK Immigration System 2010).

South African teachers will have to find an alternative and more difficult and less flexible visa entry to experience teaching in the UK classrooms.

Tier 2 (General) Visas as Alternative for South African Teachers

Unfortunately, without the Youth Mobility Scheme available to South African teachers,

the only real option they have is applying for the Tier 2 General Work Permit – provided they are able to secure a teaching post in the UK. The “General” sub-tier under Tier 2 is for people coming to the UK with a job offer to fill a gap that cannot be filled from within the resident labour force. This category is also for applicants coming to fill shortage occupations (see below). Recruitment agencies will only assist the teachers and their UK employer once the teachers have secured a senior-level position or a position that relates to a code of practice as set out by the UK Border Agency.

In terms of the PBS the following has to be done before a teacher can start working for a school under Tier 2:

- The UK school has to apply for a Sponsor's License (if they have not done so already). This process can take up to 4 months!
- The school has to comply with certain rules before a Certificate of Sponsorship can be assigned by the school to the teacher. The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) is recommending a list of approved shortage occupations which can sensibly be filled by migration. Currently, there is a shortage of professionals in the secondary education and special needs sector. The newest UK shortage occupation list (MAC 2010) includes secondary education teachers only in the subjects of maths or pure sciences (physics, chemistry, biology and any combinations of these) and all teaching posts in special needs schools. Teachers will only be able to claim points for a shortage occupation if their prospective job was on the shortage occupation list at the time their Certificate of Sponsorship was assigned. They also must work a minimum of 30 hours per week. If the position is not on the shortage occupation list it will have to be correctly advertised and the school will have to conduct the resident labour market test.
- The position on offer must be National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 (a position or qualification that requires three years study or experience) and meet the requirements as set out by the UK Border Agency.
- The teacher will have to meet a certain points criteria to qualify. To succeed they must score a minimum of 50 points from the Certificate of Sponsorship, prospective

- earnings, maintenance, English language skills and qualifications categories. Teachers who are applying in the sponsorship category will receive sufficient points to pass the 'test' without having to earn points for prospective earnings or qualifications.
- Once the Certificate of Sponsorship has been approved, the teacher needs to apply for entry clearance (a visa) in his/her own home country.

Teachers must be able to demonstrate that they have funds to support not only themselves, but also any dependants (if applicable). Currently, for the main applicant this is £800 and he/she will need a further £533 for **each** dependant accompanying him/her. These can either be the applicant's own funds, or the sponsor can certify that he/she will be responsible for the applicant's maintenance and also for his/her dependants.

The Implications: Migration to Other "Greener Pastures"

South Africa's teaching corps is particularly favoured for their loyalty, hard work and their dedication (Garrun 2007). For many years there was a high demand for South African teachers in the UK. The demand for South Africa's well-trained science and mathematics teachers will increase, not only in the UK but also other destination countries. I am predicting that in the near future, South African teachers' popularity will be absorbed by countries such as Taiwan, Thailand, China, Singapore, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and especially the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Currently, many recruitment agencies are focusing on recruiting South African teachers to the UAE. This country is considered as a new destination country which holds many possibilities and advantages for both newly qualified and experienced South African teachers. The rewards are substantial: teachers are offered free air tickets, free accommodation and meals, free transport to and from work, and free medical services and they can earn 35 000 rands per month tax free. Few South African teachers would reject such a deal.

Samodien (2008a) reported in the Cape Argus (a newspaper) about one female teacher teaching in Kuwait. Of the staff at her school exactly half were South African. She said the

environment was less stressful than back home, there were more resources, there was less paperwork because there was no Outcomes Based Education (OBE), and she no longer had to battle to find a permanent teaching position. She said she would work in Kuwait for a few more years, after which she would probably work in a different country before returning home. The same author (2008b) found posters on a wall of a university's campus promoting teaching posts in South Korea. One advertisement offered them an opportunity to join over 1000 other South Africans working as English teachers in South Korea. The job promised a salary of \$2000 a month, tax free. As part of the deal, they would also receive a 13th cheque, yearly return tickets to South Africa and a fully-furnished, rent-free apartment.

Teacher Supply and Demand in South Africa: Are We Pouring Water Into a Leaking Bucket?

The shortage of teachers remains a great concern for South Africa. The general decline in teacher numbers, as well as concern over the quality of education, has ignited a debate on the re-opening of teacher-training colleges. Colleges, which were established to train primary school teachers, were closed in the mid-1990s and teacher training shifted to universities. Although detailed data on teachers in training and newly qualified teachers is lacking, it is contended that the supply of newly qualified teachers is substantially less than the number of teaching posts that become vacant each year. According to Bertram et al. (2007) it is unknown how many teachers of a particular type are graduating at any time because there is no accurate data beyond gross enrolment in teacher education programmes. One might argue that this leads to the teacher supply and demand debate.

In recent years, South Africa has produced only a third of the teachers it needs. In 2007 only 7 392 teachers graduated, about the average of the preceding four years while 20 000 teachers are lost each year through resignation, death or illness (Unkown 2008). Crouch and Perry (2003) argued that South Africa would need between 11 000 and 18 000 teachers annually based on an analysis which factors in low and high incidences of HIV and AIDS, learner

involvement, teacher attrition and mortality. With a teacher attrition of approximately 4-5% per annum, Morgan et al. (2006) have calculated that there is a need to recruit 17 000 to 20 000 teachers per year. The learner-to-educator ratio (LER) contributes directly to the quality of schooling offered. At present the average LER in public schools is within the nationally and internationally desired levels e.g. 40:1 for primary public schools and 35:1 for secondary public schools. However, public schools and classes vary enormously in size – some educators may have classes of 50 learners or more! In 2010, the LER for ordinary public schools nationally was 30.3, while, when counting only state paid teachers in these schools, the LER increased to 32.2 (Department of Education 2010). In the same year, the DoE also announced that it would recruit 2 000 foreign teachers during the next two years to help alleviate the shortage of teachers in the country – estimated to be 20 000 (Molefe and Stewart 2008). The HSRC research report in 2008 points out that approximately 30 000 teachers are leaving the profession while between 6 000 and 7000 graduate per annum (Rademeyer 2008). On the other hand, MacGregor (2008) reports that universities are graduating around 6 000 to 10 000 teachers a year, but the profession is shedding 18 000 teachers a year.

There are great concerns as to whether the current levels of teacher supply from higher education institutions will meet projected needs. According to Paterson and Arends (2009), primary demand for teachers is influenced by how strongly the government responds to the educational aspirations of society, the constitutional mandate to provide equitable access to quality schooling opportunities and the skills needs of the economy. In addition to the scope, size, and quality targets set for the education system that determine primary teacher demand, there are several factors that influence the rate at which teachers leave the active teaching workforce. These factors create a secondary demand and include, amongst others, the teaching conditions, age profile of the teacher workforce, teacher mortality and alternative employment options. It is of utmost importance that education authorities have to address all facets of both primary and secondary demand. In particular, they must secure the conditions that will maximize the quality and length of a

teacher's working life. Unattractive conditions of service play an important role in teacher supply. Edwards and Spreen (2007) are of the opinion that factors such as manageable class size, per pupil expenditure, professional autonomy, percentage of non-teaching responsibilities in comparison to actual teaching hours, and opportunities for professional development must be considered together to obtain an accurate sense of the state of teachers' working conditions. They are also of the opinion that these factors have relevance to teacher incentives, absenteeism, shortages and overall changes in the teaching profession. Attending to demand only by increasing supply is like pouring water into a leaking bucket.

CONCLUSION

Teacher shortage in South Africa does exist. This shortage is confined to specific subjects, phases and regions. South Africa has a shortage of mathematics, science and language teachers in both urban and rural public schools. The DoE and government has introduced drastic steps and strategies to overcome the severe shortage of teachers. Firstly, the DoE allocated 180 million rands in 2008 for service-linked bursaries for 5 000 student teachers in universities, aiming to train more primary school teachers, more teachers to work in rural and impoverished schools, and more mathematics, science and language teachers – the areas of critical shortage. Secondly, retired and unemployed experts were recruited to take up jobs in the education profession – so that their expertise could be channelled back into the country. Thirdly, South Africa has signed no reciprocal agreement for youth mobility opportunities in the UK. And fourthly, teachers have been recruited from more foreign countries – countries such as Egypt, Kenya, India and the Netherlands are keen to provide the required professionals to teach mathematics and science. Teachers from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Uganda, Australia, New Zealand and Canada are already teaching in South African schools. Recruitment of foreign teachers to fill vacancies is only a short-term solution. South Africa blamed the UK for enlisting foreign teachers “UK behind SA brain drain” (Unknown 2001), but we are now doing the same. Hiring of foreign teachers may be a band-aid treating the symptom of the

teacher shortage but it is not a cure for the conditions that caused the shortage. South Africa has to start producing its own teachers. If South African dependency on foreign teachers continues, there will be restricted development with regard to more local teachers.

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