

Migrant Zimbabwean Teachers in South Africa: Challenging and Rewarding Issues

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Abstract

The research carried out regarding the experiences of migrant teachers in South Africa mainly highlights the challenges that these teachers face. This article reports on a case study that sought to document the experiences of 15 Zimbabwean teachers working in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Data were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews and analysed qualitatively using open coding. The study revealed that migrant teachers encountered several challenging issues including: a lack of job security, short and unreliable contracts, difficulties in accessing loans for those employed on short contracts, exploitation, xenophobic discrimination, lack of induction, and lack of learner discipline. Professional development, good financial rewards, social acceptance, and political freedom were some of the rewards that they enjoyed in South Africa. Understanding the experiences of migrant teachers is crucial to the promotion of their rights, reduction of the risks associated with their migration, and to the improvement of their professionalism. Further research is necessary to find ways of protecting migrant teachers against discrimination and exploitation. It is also recommended that policy is drawn up that would facilitate the compassionate termination of migrant teachers' employment contracts once the required number of South African teachers has been reached.

Keywords: Challenges; South Africa; teacher migration; teacher shortages; Zimbabwean teachers

Introduction

Key stakeholders in education in South Africa, like the South African Department of Basic Education and the South African Council of Educators, agree that a gap between the demand and supply of teachers has existed since 2006 or earlier (Department of Basic Education (DBE) 2015; South African Council for Educators (SACE) 2011). This gap is caused by the high rate of teacher attrition, which has been attributed to the following factors: HIV/AIDS, the emigration of teachers to New Zealand, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States (De Villiers 2011) and Korea (De Villiers 2017), teachers leaving the profession because of low salaries and poor working conditions in comparison to jobs in other sectors, a slow and inefficient programme of teacher development, and the perception of an oversupply of teachers in the country (DBE 2015; Pitsoe 2013). To bridge this gap between the demand and supply of teachers, South Africa has had to employ migrant teachers. Although the exact number of migrant teachers presently in South Africa is unknown, there is no doubt that Zimbabwean teachers constitute the largest group of migrant teachers (SAC 2011). According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2013), the top five countries supplying migrant teachers to South Africa in 2010 were Zimbabwe (61%), Ghana (9%), Nigeria (7%), Lesotho (5%) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (4%) (Daniels and Green 2014). A figure of around 40 000 teachers in 2013, as presented by Manik (2013), gives an idea of the population of migrant Zimbabwean teachers in South Africa. It is also unclear how many of the migrant Zimbabwean teachers in South Africa are working as teachers. However, Crush et al. (2012) estimate that up to 47% of the migrant Zimbabwean teachers in South Africa end up working in employment sectors other than education.

The Experiences of Zimbabwean Teachers in South Africa

Some limited studies on the experiences of migrant teachers in South Africa have been carried out. Zimbabwean migrant teachers have captured the interest of far more researchers than any other migrant teacher group. The core of the research on the experiences of foreign teachers has been carried out by Manik (Manik 2012; 2013; 2014a; 2014b). Her studies have focused mainly on Zimbabwean teachers working in the KwaZulu-Natal province, and in the Limpopo and Gauteng provinces. Manik's studies paint a picture of exploitation and of professional and social exclusion that have the potential of degrading the migrant teachers' confidence.

Xenophobia colours the experiences of migrant teachers in South Africa and is an enduring theme in the study of migrant experience, for example, Osman (2009, p. 67) found that foreign teachers in South Africa were emotionally affected by the xenophobic incidents of May 2008 and some did not report for duty in that period as they felt insecure. Manik's (2013) study on xenophobia among migrant Zimbabwean teachers in KwaZulu-Natal focused on 13 teachers in two major urban centres and one rural district in the province. The study revealed that migrant teachers suffer social and professional disconnection, resulting in psychological trauma because of xenophobia. Consequently, it was concluded that migrant teachers yearn for socio-professional justice and sensitivity in their treatment.

Challenges in acquiring the appropriate documentation to secure employment and safe accommodation is a common theme in the experiences of migrant teachers (Vandeyar et al. 2014; Weda 2013). This exposes the corruption and the nonchalant nature of the treatment that migrant teachers receive from South African education and migration authorities, as well as their exploitation by private school owners (Manik 2012). In the classroom, the migrants do not receive a warm welcome from the learners, instead the learners take a leaf from society and treat the migrant teachers with the same contempt that the teachers are treated with outside school (Vandeyar et al. 2014). The experiences documented in the literature are mainly negative, however, it would be natural to suspect that the migrant teachers derive some rewards from their employment and stay in South Africa that counterbalance the negative experiences. Hence this study sought not only to document the challenging issues affecting the migrant teachers, but also the rewarding ones.

Problem Statement

South African schools employ a considerable number of migrant teachers to help alleviate teacher shortages, a situation that has resulted in migrant teachers becoming an integral part of the South African education system. Some research directed at their professional and personal experiences of working in South Africa has been done, which points mainly to the challenges that they face in securing employment, xenophobic discrimination, and suffering personal and professional isolation (Manik 2012; Manik 2013; Weda 2013). The fact that these migrant teachers have chosen to persevere in these conditions and continue to seek contract renewals and to work in South Africa points to the fact that they must derive some rewards from working in South Africa. The research objectives were directed at exploring the

challenging and rewarding experiences in the personal and professional lives of some migrant Zimbabwean teachers working in South Africa. Two research questions guided this research. What are the challenging issues that Zimbabwean teachers face in their work and stay in South Africa? What issues do they consider as rewarding in their work and stay in South Africa?

In the following sections, a synopsis of the Push and Pull factor model of worker migration and Caravatti et al.'s (2014) three models for the engagement of migrant teachers are presented. The methodology and research design, the findings, discussions and, finally, the conclusions and recommendations are also presented.

Theoretical Framework

The Push and Pull Factor Model of Worker Migration

The Push and Pull Model was used as a lens through which to examine the migration experience of the sample of migrant Zimbabwean teachers in this study. In this model, the out-migration of skilled labour is seen as a function of the disparities that exist between sending and receiving countries (El-Khawas 2004 p. 40). These disparities are expressed as push factors in the source countries and pull factors in the destination countries. Push factors refer to the hostile conditions in source countries that compel skilled workers to engage in international migration (Dovlo 2003 p. 4). Pull factors are the attractive socio-economic conditions that draw workers to receiving countries (El-Khawas 2004 p. 40). Low salaries, poor service conditions, impediments to self-advancement, strife, and an unclear path of career progression are commonly regarded as push factors, especially in Africa, while the pull factors usually include better living and working conditions (Dovlo 2003; El-Khawas 2004). The Zimbabwean teachers in South Africa are commonly viewed as being pushed by the hostile socio-economic conditions (SACE 2011) and political repression (Ranga 2015) in their country that constitute what has been termed 'the Zimbabwean crisis'. However, they are drawn towards South Africa by strong pull factors, which include better salaries, political freedom, and a higher standard of living (SACE 2011).

Models for the Engagement of Migrant Teachers

Caravatti et al. (2014) offer three models used by countries to engage migrant teachers. These models are based on the intentions of those hiring the migrant teachers. We have found the

models useful in the analysis of the professional experiences of the sampled migrant teachers because the intentions of the employer heavily influence these experiences. Therefore, Caravatti et al.'s (2014) three models of teacher engagement were used to understand the professional experiences of the migrant Zimbabwean teachers. We briefly examine the models below.

The Professional Exchange Model

The purpose of engagement under this model is to provide the migrant teachers with professional development that enhances their knowledge and skills. This model of engagement thus offers a good opportunity to raise the standard and status of teaching. It can also lead to the development of reciprocal structures in the source and destination countries, and it therefore can be mutually beneficial for the two countries.

The Language and Curricular Programme Model

The purpose of the engagement of the migrant teachers under this model is to better prepare the learners for citizenship in a globalised world. In this model, the destination country, or the employer, seeks and hires teachers who can deliver specialised coursework usually in targeted language instructions. The migrant teachers are engaged for the purposes of diversifying the curriculum and the world-view of the learners. Consequently, the world-view of both the migrant teachers and the learners is invariably expanded under this model.

The Shortage Hiring Model

This is a model that is adopted as a response to teacher labour market failures and mismatches in the demand and supply of teaching staff. Therefore, the purpose is to engage migrant teachers to meet the staffing needs in identified locations and in subject areas capitalising on wage differentials. Since the teachers are not hired to diversify the curriculum as in the Language and Curricular model, their foreignness is not always valued. Their job security can be uncertain and the teachers are usually vulnerable and lack structured support and protection. Other countries that have adopted the Shortage Hiring Model include the United States, United Kingdom, Philippines, India, Maldives, Nigeria and Ghana (Caravatti et al. 2014). In South Africa's case, the engagement of migrant teachers is in response to mismatches in the demand and supply of teachers. Wage differentials between Zimbabwe and South Africa have contributed to the migration flow of teachers from Zimbabwe to South Africa (SACE 2011). It can be argued, therefore, that South Africa has adopted the Shortage

Hiring model in its engagement of Zimbabwean teachers and that the experiences of these teachers are likely to be better understood using this model.

Research Design and Methodology

This study holds the interpretive position that knowledge is of a softer and transcendental kind, and is based on experience and insight of a personal nature, just like its epistemological assumptions. The interpretive position demands an ideographic methodological preference where the focus is on the subjective experience of individuals who create, modify and interpret the world they are in (Merriam 2009). A qualitative research approach within an interpretive paradigm was therefore adopted. A multiple (collective) case study design was employed to explore the research questions since the purpose of the research was to describe, understand and interpret the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam 2009). A multiple case study often includes “cases that are either similar or different in certain key ways – to make comparisons, build theory, or propose generalizations” (Leedy and Ormond 2014 p. 143).

Purposive and convenient sampling were used to select the teachers from the Gauteng province of South Africa. The purposive selection criteria used were for a Zimbabwean trained teacher with at least one year's teaching experience in South African schools, and who was teaching at a high school at the time of selection. To improve the heterogeneity of the sample, the inclusion of a more-or-less equal number of men and women was adopted as another criterion. The sampling was also convenient since the choice of participants was limited to those from schools in Gauteng as they were easily accessible to the researchers. The snowball sampling strategy was employed as successive participants were suggested by the preceding individual (Nieuwenhuis 2009).

In-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were employed to solicit the migrant teachers' experiences. Semi-structured interviews were chosen since they permit the use of predetermined questions and allow for some discussion and further probing (Cresswell 2008). Some closed questions were asked to solicit the teachers' biographic information. Only one interview per participant was held and the interviews were from 32 to 60 minutes long. Follow-up clarifications were done telephonically or via e-mail where necessary. All of the interviews were voice recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were analysed qualitatively using open coding. Concepts were grouped together into categories and themes through which

inductive codes emerged from the data (Nieuwenhuis 2009). Direct quotations from the participants were used to present the data; this helped to produce credible and convincing data.

The research instrument was validated by two experts in the field and piloted before use, where after any ambiguities and redundancies were eliminated. To ensure trustworthiness, interviews were voice recorded to get accurate and relatively complete records (Rule and John 2011). The transcriptions were then checked by the participants. The research complied with the ethical guidelines laid down for educational research by the researchers' institutions of affiliation; these included confidentiality, voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, trust, and safety in participation.

Findings

Biographic and Professional Profile of Participants

The sample consisted of seven males and eight female participants. At the time of carrying out the research, ten of the participants were teaching in public schools and five in privately owned schools. Their modal age was in the mid-forties. Fourteen teachers indicated that they were parents. The spouses or children of 10 teachers followed the migrant between 2006 and 2010. On average, each participant had taught in Zimbabwe for about 12 years, in South Africa for eight years and had taught in three different schools in South Africa (Table 1). Only five of the participants were permanently employed (Permanent employees do not have a predetermined end date to employment). The other teachers were temporary employed (one-month to one-year short-term contracts).

Table 1. Participants’ biographic and professional details

| Pseudonyms | Gender | Years taught in South Africa | School type | Number of South African schools taught at | Employment status |
|-------------|--------|------------------------------|-------------|---|-------------------|
| Anaclea | Female | 8 | Public | 5 | Contract |
| Chipo | Female | 6 | Private | 1 | Contract |
| Collins | Male | 8 | Private | 2 | Permanent |
| Gamuchirai | Female | 10 | Private | 4 | Contract |
| Gladys | Female | 8 | Public | 5 | Contract |
| Langa | Female | 7 | Public | 1 | Contract |
| Mandlenkosi | Male | 8 | Public | 1 | Permanent |
| Maria | Female | 4 | Public | 5 | Contract |
| Mlamuleli | Male | 10 | Public | 1 | Contract |
| Munyaradzi | Male | 8 | Private | 1 | Permanent |
| Nomsa | Female | 7 | Private | 2 | Permanent |
| Simba | Male | 5 | Public | 4 | Contract |
| Sithembile | Female | 5 | Public | 3 | Permanent |
| Themba | Male | 10 | Public | 5 | Contract |
| Tongai | Male | 8 | Public | 3 | Contract |

The participants taught the following school subjects: eleven taught in the area of mathematics and science, two each in accounting, economics, isiZulu and history, and one each in geography, religious education, technology, Social Sciences, Economic Management Sciences, and engineering graphics and design. Some participants taught more than one subject. All of the participants except two indicated that they were teaching the subjects for which they were trained. The highest qualifications held by the participants were as follows: three had Doctoral degrees, two held Master’s degrees, and the rest had Bachelor’s degrees.

Challenging Issues

The participants raised several issues that they felt were challenges in their work and stay in South Africa. We present these and then discuss them briefly in this section.

- ***Lack of Job Security***

The issue mentioned by most (14 out of 15) of the participants as the most challenging was the lack of job security, which was mainly a product of the short-term contracts that they worked under. These short contracts were used by public schools, as well as some private schools. The participants explained that the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), which hired migrant teachers to work in public schools, offered migrant teachers mostly three-month contracts and, in exceptional cases, one-year contracts. “Temporary (employment) here refers to renewal all the time; it is not even a year thing but it’s a term thing,” explained Mlamuleli. His complaint highlights migrant teachers’ frustration at having to constantly renew their

contracts or seek new ones. The participants explained that the renewal of their contracts was always cumbersome.

An issue that further exacerbated migrant teachers' job security in public schools was a rider in their contracts that specified that if a suitably qualified South African were to be found to replace the migrant teacher then the migrant teacher would be given one month to vacate the post. Chipo articulated the difficulties with this issue thus, "How can they give a professional such a contract! A month and go where? To go back to your country? Family and everyone using a month's salary?" Chipo, like the other participants, found this rider grossly unfair and insensitive to the migrant teachers since it invalidated the contract duration.

The contracts from some private schools were apparently not any better than those offered by the GDE to teach in public schools. Some participants revealed that privately owned schools often failed to honour contracts in terms of salary promised, a fixed pay-date, workload, pension contributions and class allocation, among others. The participants reported that certain private school owners went to the extent of crafting attractive contracts that they never intended to honour but used to lure migrant teachers to their schools. Sithembile described how she once worked for a privately-owned school for three months without pay despite having signed a contract that clearly specified the salary amount and payment date. "I was promised a salary but then...It never materialised," she explained to the interviewer. The owners of the school initially gave her excuses but eventually made it clear that they were not willing to pay her and she left. Chipo made the following observation on the issue, "I have observed a disturbing trend where foreign teachers are just people to be used and discarded by the owners of private schools." Therefore the participants felt that in South Africa they did not enjoy the same level of protection from labour exploitation as their South African colleagues. Mlamuleli explained that no one is standing up for the rights of foreign teachers not even labour unions. According to De Villiers and Weda (2018) teacher unions have an important role to play in addressing migrant teachers' challenges and needs such as higher salaries and permanent positions but they have been disappointingly silent on this matter.

The lack of job security opened the migrant teachers to even more exploitation in schools. The employers and the school management in some schools took advantage of migrant teachers' insecurity to extract as much labour as they could from them for the least amount of pay. Analeta complained, "I would say because of these temporary positions you are forced to please a lot. You can't say your say. Whatever they say you have to adhere to, because you

feel if you oppose, maybe you could lose your job.” Her complaint exposes the helplessness and the loss of voice that the migrant teachers experienced due to their fear of losing their jobs.

- ***Socio-economic Ramifications of the Short and Unreliable Contracts***

The job insecurity caused by working on short and unreliable contracts had several negative socio-economic ramifications for the migrant teachers, one of which was financial insecurity. One participant reported that the most difficult time financially was at the beginning of the year since most public schools only hired migrant teachers in February or later. “January, you may go without a salary, even February. This is a common practice,” explained Maria. This causes financial and social challenges for the migrant teachers as they may fail to pay their rentals or keep their children fed, clothed and in school.

Closely linked to job instability is the inability of the migrant teachers to access loans. Most migrant teachers were unable to access loans from reputable lending institutions. “They access you on their system. They tell you, ‘You are high risk’ because when you are on a short contract. They also look at your permit – it’s temporary!” said Simba shaking his head in disapproval. They also found it extremely difficult to open credit accounts in most shops because they “could not be trusted.” The migrant teachers “could not be trusted” with loans and credit because they were employed on short-term contracts. Several participants reported that in times of crisis, they were forced to borrow money from unregistered lenders who charged them exorbitant interest rates and resorted to violence if there were delays in repayment. The migrant teachers’ inability to access loans also meant that their chances of securing safe accommodation and reliable transport were curtailed. Monetary deposits are usually a precondition to acquiring lease of property and the deposits increase with the quality of the accommodation. The failure to access loans to buy their own cars meant that the migrant teachers have to commute using the unreliable public transport system.

- ***Learner Challenges and Lack of Induction***

In the classroom, most of the participants reported that they were challenged by the energetic South African learners. Chipso expressed her exasperation thus, “The South African child is 10 times more energetic and noisy compared to the Zimbabwean children, and they just do not want to learn!” Other than having high energy levels, the learners were reported as generally lacking respect and motivation to learn. The participants described the learners as “intimidating”, “ill-disciplined”, “disruptive”, “difficult to control”, among others.

Alternatively, the same migrant teachers found themselves with no means to control the learners but to merely appeal to them to behave. “At the end of the day all you can do is shout and shout, pleading with them to keep quiet,” explained Mlamuleli. As far as the migrant teachers were concerned, there were no effective disciplinary measures that could bring about a change in the behaviour of the unruly learners. Nomsa, for example, complained that the learners “...hide behind their rights to avoid punishment.”

Furthermore, most of the migrant teachers (13 in total) decried the lack of induction in South African schools. Chipso considered the lack of induction programmes as the main reason for migrant teachers ‘struggling’ in South African schools. The migrant teachers complained of being “...thrown into the deep-end of a swimming pool” when they could not swim. Many schools employ only one or two migrant teacher per year and consider it time consuming and not cost effective to implement induction programmes.

- *Language Challenges*

Language presented a challenge to the participants in the schools where the migrant teachers taught and in the communities in which they lived. Some (8 out of 15) of the participants reported that they were unfamiliar with the local language(s) commonly used by their learners and by the surrounding community. While all the participants were teaching in English-medium schools and were fluent in English, the learners were not. Therefore, they reported that they felt under pressure to emulate their South African colleagues’ classroom practice of code-switching. “I wish I could explain in their language, but I don’t know it. So, I would ask one learner to explain in their own language, but I still can’t check if she understood what she is explaining properly,” Gamuchirai explained. The strategy of using the learners as interpreters was also adopted by Collins.

Some of participants also reported that once learners realised that the teachers were not proficient in the learners’ indigenous languages, they took advantage of the situation to poke fun at the teachers. “In my first school, they could insult me in the vernacular, knowing that I don’t know what they are saying,” elaborated Munyaradzi. Munyaradzi, Simba and Tongai reported that they had to learn Tswana quickly and this improved their classroom management.

A few of participants complained that they felt excluded from some school meetings because these were at times conducted in a local language that they did not understand. “You can have people in a meeting and they resort to local languages,” explained Maria. Their lack of

familiarity with the commonly used languages also limited their choice of where they could live and work, for example, Nomsa explained, “I normally avoid townships because of the language barrier.” Townships are high density suburban settlements where the working class and lower middle class predominantly reside and different indigenous languages are spoken. Nomsa preferred instead to live and work in the more affluent suburbs where English is more commonly used. The employment options of the migrant teachers were also restricted to English-medium schools.

- ***Xenophobia and Discrimination***

Xenophobia and discrimination posed challenges to the participants’ stay. Most of the teachers lived in constant fear of xenophobic violence. “You don’t know if you will survive the next xenophobic attack,” explained Gamuchirai. This fear influenced their choice of areas of work and residence and the forms of public transport that they used. Munyaradzi, for example, explained, “I am afraid of (xenophobic) attacks in some places, but in Pretoria, in town or eastern suburbs, it is okay.” This indicates the careful consideration that he put into choosing his area of work and residence.

The majority of the participants (12 out of 15) reported that they had to contend with xenophobic slurs from learners and discrimination from some of their South African colleagues. It was reported that once the learners discovered that the teachers were foreigners, they tended to be disrespectful towards them and they deliberately taunted them, calling them names like kwerekwere (Kwerekwere is a derogatory term used by black South Africans to refer to immigrants from the rest of Africa). Collins described his experiences thus, “There is this idea of being labelled as Kwerekwere. Even our colleagues call us that. I actually had to accept that. I am a Kwerekwere.”

Four migrant teachers also reported suffering what they called “a different kind of xenophobia” in schools. “It is a bit more subtle, it’s not a physical attack it’s more of a professional xenophobia,” explained Gladys. The following are two examples given by the participants of the professional discrimination that they experienced: Munyaradzi gave the following description of discrimination: “You find this Principal that wants to see lesson plans, but they only point at you. The following term again, ‘I want to see your lesson plan’. The local teachers don’t get asked.”

These reports point to the fact that the participants felt unappreciated by some of their South Africa colleagues, and were instead treated with suspicion and contempt.

Rewarding Issues

The participants had several issues that they felt were rewarding in their work, which is why they stayed as migrant teachers in South Africa. In this section, we will present the different categories of rewarding issues that they mentioned and then discuss all of them briefly.

- ***Professional and Personal Development***

Professional and personal development featured prominently (mentioned by 13 of the 15 participants) as rewarding issues in the work and life of the migrant teachers. Issues that were categorised under professional development included: learning to do something new in the profession, mastering new educational technology, exposure to a new curriculum, the acquisition of new teaching methodologies, and learning new ways of discipline and classroom management. Professional development was therefore taken to refer to a teacher's growth or improvement as a teacher. Workshops, addresses by experts, and training in preparation for changes in the curriculum are some of the events and processes mentioned by the participants as contributing to their professional development.

Gladys, for example, was impressed with the number of opportunities available for teacher professional development in South Africa:

“Here (in South Africa) there is a lot of professional development that they do. For the past weeks, I went to Johannesburg for Smart Board training that they want to introduce. It has boosted my confidence as a teacher and on the technological aspect of it.”

According to Gladys, participating in the many opportunities for professional development boosts teachers' confidence as they are equipped with skills to use new technology in the classroom.

Anacleta – whose plans included teaching in the Far East – felt that the South African education system had fully equipped her with the requisite skills to function in any country, “I've real stretched myself; the system has trained me very well and exposed me to international standards.” A set of the skills that Munyaradzi acquired and developed in South African schools was that of classroom management without the use of corporal punishment, “When I got here it was a different situation altogether, there is no corporal punishment, I have gained a lot, I teach very well without corporal punishment.”

It sounds contradictory that the same education department that offers teacher training opportunities should fail to induct the new migrant teachers into the system. There is probably an assumption at departmental level that the Zimbabwean teachers that they employ are experienced and will be able to function in the South African system without any need for induction. At school level the management might actually see induction of migrant teachers as a waste of time because of their small numbers per school and the fact that they are usually employed on short contracts.

In the category of personal development, we grouped the acquisition of survival skills, the development of independence, improved decision-making, more effective budgeting and financial discipline, obtaining a new qualification, developing self-confidence, learning to interact with people from different cultures, and acquiring a new language. Personal development, although not totally divorced from professional development, was taken to be growth, gain or development in an area that was not directly linked to the participants' profession of teaching.

Five of the participants felt that the life they were living in South Africa presented them with challenges that contributed to their personal development. This is how Chipso described her personal development,

“I have grown as an individual in terms of self-confidence and that comes from facing challenges like making a living on nothing for months, and working with no contract and living on the money you have in your pocket, never taking a loan.”

Gladys, alternatively, emphasised the personal growth that was a product of her interaction with people of different cultures, she said, “Even in the complex that I am living in, you have black South Africans, Coloured and other Africans that are also foreigners. This made me grow to tolerate a lot and also to appreciate.”

- ***Financial Rewards***

Just more than half of the migrant teachers who participated in the study reported that they found living and working in South Africa to be financially rewarding. They were happy they could afford to meet their needs, remit some money, lead comfortable lives and send their children to functional and well-resourced schools. Most of the teachers interviewed preferred their children's schooling in South Africa. Langa explained, “I can offer my children the best

education I can, better than that in Zimbabwe, because I am taking them to good schools now, and I can afford it.”

However, even though they still enjoyed the fact that they could afford a decent standard of living on their salaries, they still felt that they deserved more. Mlamuleli articulated the issue as follows, “When it comes to salary issues I think we are underpaid. Underpaid!” The complaint was that although the South African system demanded and employed experienced teachers, they paid them at the salary levels of teachers who are new to teaching. The migrant Zimbabwean teachers’ expertise and high qualifications were not rewarded. Manik (2014a) states that migrant teachers’ salaries are not the same as those of South African teachers because the former mostly occupy mainly temporary and not permanent positions in schools.

Acceptance and Generosity

The majority of the participants reported that acceptance into the schools and surrounding communities, and the generosity of South Africans was a highly rewarding issue in their work and stay in South Africa. They basked in the generosity of some of their colleagues, learners and community members. They also enjoyed the respect, collegiality and the mentorship that they received from some of their South African colleagues. “You won’t believe that at some point they even offered us their cars to drive around when we didn’t have a car of our own,” exclaimed Maria – who found other South Africans to be friendly and supportive. The gratitude, especially from the learners and parents, was well appreciated by some participants. Anacleta enjoyed the fact that the learners loved her and showed her a lot of respect, “Learners love me a lot. We have a rapport, and we understand each other.” Chipó’s sense of achievement with the learners gave her a lot of job satisfaction, “Well my greatest joy here and anywhere else is to know that I have made a difference in somebody’s life.”

It is apparent that the South African society like every other society is not homogenous and neither is it unanimously xenophobic. There are some South Africans (adults and learners) who appreciate Zimbabwean migrant teachers and treat them humanely while others do not.

- *Abundance of Resources*

Several of the participants reported that working with the wide range of teaching-learning media and resources available was rewarding. “Actually, if I had to compare South African schools to Zimbabwean schools ... there are so many resources here!” Collins exclaimed. The participant migrant teachers felt that, compared to the Zimbabwean situation, there was an

abundance of electronic and non-electronic teaching and learning media available in South African schools, and this made their work easier and more interesting. The manageable teacher-learner ratio, a reasonable workload, the ease of getting a job once one had the necessary documentation and the freedom of speech that they enjoyed were some of the other rewarding issues mentioned by the participants.

Discussion

We argue that the experiences of the migrant teachers abroad are linked to the hiring model under which they are engaged. Of the three hiring models that are expounded by Caravatti et al. (2014), South Africa seems to have adopted the Shortage Hiring Model as it seeks to satisfy its staffing needs. The vulnerability that the migrant teachers face due to their short contracts and temporary residence status are to be expected since, according to Caravatti et al. (2014), the employer does not feel obliged to render any purposeful support or protection to teachers hired using the Shortage Hiring Model. The migrant teachers are not valued beyond their purpose of plugging the gaps created by local shortages. The fact that even the small group of migrant teachers participating in this study had highly qualified and vastly experienced teachers, some in possession of doctoral degrees, and who were engaged as temporary teachers, shows that their employers were interested in them only in so-far-as they served the purpose of filling staffing gaps.

We observe the nonchalant treatment that inevitably leaves Zimbabwean migrant teachers in schools and in the education system feeling vulnerable and insecure, confirming the conclusion derived from the review of literature. Migrant teachers struggle with classroom management as the learners they teach show them no respect (Vandeyar et al. 2014). Their social, economic and professional vulnerability opens them up to exploitation by unscrupulous private school owners and public school leadership.

Caravatti et al. (2014) further argue that under the Shortage Hiring Model (unlike in the Language and Curricular Programmes) schools have no intention of diversifying the curriculum and extending the world view of the learners by taking advantage of their migrant teachers' lived experience. In other words, the foreign status of the migrant teachers is not always accorded curriculum value. Rather, the xenophobic discrimination and undermining of migrant teachers' opinions within schools attest to the fact that their 'foreignness' and their 'foreign' opinions are consistently disparaged. The migrant teachers in South Africa are viewed with suspicion by South African teachers and the discriminatory actions against them

show that South African teachers feel threatened by their presence. It could be that South African teachers fear that the migrant teacher might take their jobs (Kalitanyi and Visser 2010).

Migrant teachers regard the professional and personal development that they receive in their work in South Africa as highly rewarding. Professional development is the result of exposure to different technology and methodologies of teaching and classroom management. To the migrant teachers, personal development is a function of their triumph over migration challenges. Also, highly regarded are the financial rewards that enable some migrant teachers to send their children to good schools and still afford a comfortable life.

It is apparent that South Africa provides migrant teachers with opportunities that their home country could not provide. The idea that migrant teachers are in South Africa because they are driven by their need to remain employed in their profession while maintaining the standard of living and social prestige that teachers as professionals expect as normative (Weda 2013) seems to be validated by the experiences of this group of teachers. The migrant teachers felt a sense of relief relative to the deprivation that they felt when they worked and lived in Zimbabwe.

The fact that the migrant teachers were unhappy with their salaries could be a complaint against the devaluation of their qualifications and previous experience. Their engagement as temporary teachers, despite their high qualifications, attests to this devaluation. Deniz (2016) observes that the qualifications and previous knowledge acquired by migrant workers in the source country are usually devalued in the destination country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The migrant teachers who participated in this study revealed that they faced several challenging issues in their work and stay in South Africa. Short-term contracts exposed them to exploitation and denied them a chance to advance their careers and improve their salaries. Their temporary status in the country meant that they could not access loans or anything on credit, which made it difficult for them to purchase capital assets. This state of affairs influenced where they could live and the kind of transport that they used. In the classroom, the migrant teachers were challenged by the high-energy levels of the South African learners. They found the learners disrespectful and lacking in discipline and motivation for learning.

The stress of dealing with this unusually demanding working environment was exacerbated by their lack of adequate induction.

The most rewarding issue that the participants mentioned was professional and personal development. They felt challenged to learn new skills, new ways of doing things, and developed new attitudes towards life and work. Although some teachers suffered xenophobic slurs from some of the learners, endured discrimination from their South African colleagues, and lived in constant fear of xenophobic violence, others found working in South Africa financially rewarding and enjoyed the respect and acceptance from their learners, community and colleagues. The workload was reasonable and the teaching/learning media abundant and the pay still much better than they would ever get in in Zimbabwe for the same job. It is these rewarding issues that apparently “pull” these migrant teachers and keep them living and working in South Africa despite the “push” of the many negatives.

Migrant teachers perform an important role in balancing the teacher demand-supply equation in the South African education system. There is a need to reduce the risks associated with their migration in order to enhance their performance. We recommend further research into ways of protecting migrant teachers against discrimination and exploitation, and into ways that local teacher unions could be brought in to protect migrant teachers. Protecting migrant teachers could shield the status of the teaching profession itself from the diminution that results from its casualisation.

We also challenge the world of academia to come up with models for the long-term engagement of migrant teachers that have an option for permanent employment for the migrant teachers who prefer that kind of contract. The short-term employment contracts that migrant teachers are forced to accept seem to indicate a lack of a long-term strategy for the role of migrant teachers in the South African education system. We recommend that policy is drawn up that would facilitate the compassionate termination of migrant teachers’ employment contracts once the required number of South African teachers has been reached. Failure to do so could result in a situation that could compromise South Africa’s relations with source countries.

Migrant teachers’ need for formal induction into the South African education system was clearly articulated by the participants in this study. Migrant teachers hired for the first time need to be given some induction, as well as long-term support in the form of mentoring at

their schools. This could be done by senior teachers at the schools where they teach, and would ensure that migrants can teach effectively within the shortest period.

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