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**‘My coming to South Africa made everything possible’:**

## **The socio-economic and political reasons for migrant teachers being in Johannesburg.**

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### **Abstract**

Teacher migration is a phenomenon that gained international momentum more than eighteen years ago. South Africa was one of the developing countries within the Commonwealth which were greatly affected by the loss of homegrown skills in respect to teacher emigration to the United Kingdom. In the past ten years, however, South Africa has attracted teachers from neighbouring countries. Whilst there have been some studies on migrant teachers in South Africa, research on migrant teachers in primary schools is a neglected area. This paper reports on some of the findings of a qualitative teacher immigration study undertaken in Johannesburg which focussed on primary school teachers. The paper explores the economic, political, and social reasons for migrant teachers teaching in Johannesburg. The push and pull theory of the seminal scholar, Lee (1966) and Bett’s (2010) insights into survival migration and chain migration provide the theoretical dimensions for this paper. Primary school teachers from both public and private schools participated in this research and data was generated through interviews and focus group discussions. Migrant teachers select Johannesburg, South Africa as a survival strategy for a range of economic, political and social reasons. Primary schools in Johannesburg have been overcoming their teacher shortages with this influx of migrant teachers, benefitting from this brain gain.

**Keywords** teacher migration, push and pull factors, primary schools.

### **Introduction**

This paper reports on the data generated from a teacher immigration study undertaken in

Johannesburg, South Africa. The economic, social and political imperatives that underpin a sample of migrant teachers working in

Johannesburg are presented. The findings have significance for teachers of Geography in the Further Education and Training phase who will be able to utilize the context-specific data to enrich their lessons theoretically on the reasons for migration. We begin with a discussion of the South-South migration of teachers and the need for teachers in South Africa. The greatest number of these migrant teachers can be found in the province of Gauteng. The theoretical influences and methodology are explained for their relevance to this paper. Key findings on the reasons for migrant teachers being in Johannesburg and a discussion thereof follows. The paper culminates in some salient conclusions.

Since opening its borders upon becoming a democracy, immigration to South Africa has gained momentum. There have been few studies on teacher immigration in the context of South Africa. For example, Manik (2011b) studied Zimbabwean teachers in Kwa-Zulu Natal province and Singh (2013) undertook a study of Zimbabwean teachers in Limpopo province. Keevy, Green and Manik (2014) undertook a national quantitative study on foreign teachers in public schools. However, there has been no research interest directed to migrant teachers specifically at primary schools. The recent study by Keevy et al (2014) revealed that in 2010 migrant teachers made up a very small percentage (less than 0.5 per cent) of teachers employed in public schools. Of these teachers, the majority (28 per cent) were employed in Gauteng, hence, the location of this study.

#### *The Need for teachers in South Africa*

The shortage of educators is a global challenge. The challenges specific to South Africa are un/under-qualified educators; a shortage of Mathematics and science educators; a shortage of newly qualified

primary school teachers; and a general lack of interest in teaching as a profession. Currently, although the Department of Education has invested in producing more teachers, such as the Funza LuShaka bursary, there still appears to be teacher shortages in particular specialisation fields and certain geographic areas. Rural areas, for example, struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers.

The May 2011, figures taken from the government employee database (known as the Persal system) revealed that 5400 foreign teachers work in public schools. Teachers originally from Zimbabwe accounted for 3796 of these, putting them in the majority. Teachers also hailed from India (501), from Ghana (500) and Namibia (90) (Grobbelaar, 2011, p. 1). Grobbelaar argues that the employee Persal database figures indicate the dire need for teachers who teach Mathematics and Physical Science as most of the foreign teachers were appointed to teach these subjects to pupils from grades 7 to grade 12. These teachers can be found working in schools in Gauteng (1286 teachers), Eastern Cape (975 teachers) and Limpopo (934 teachers).

Theoretically, push and pull theory (Lee, 1966) explains migration and it has been extensively used to understand teacher migration. In this study as teacher immigration to Johannesburg was the focus, the pull factors that have drawn immigrant teachers, particularly to Johannesburg in South Africa were of significance.

#### **Lee's (1966) Push-Pull Theory**

Lee's push-pull theory shows that negative characteristics push migrants out of the origin area while the positive aspects of the destination area pull the migrants towards a specific direction. The movements occur

between two places; however, there can be intervening obstacles to these spatial movements. Muñiz et al (2010, p. 6) explain that “although these obstacles are represented by ‘mountain’ shapes, keep in mind that the obstacles need not be limited to physical barriers”. They also stated that “detering migration regulations, for instance, can present a challenging obstacle to potential migrants”. They further articulated that it should be noted that both the origin and destination have push and pull factors, indicating the certainty that any migrant will have to consider both the positives of residing in the host country and the negatives of moving, as well as their opposites. This theory is centred on migrant rationality – that migrants make logical decisions. The rationality of the push-pull theory is that “if the pulls at the destination outweigh ...staying at the origin, then migration is likely to occur” (Muñiz et al 2010, p. 6).

### **Pull Factors**

Ekiss (2011) describes pull factors as those factors “that draw you to live in a place”. Ochs’ (2007, p. 8) explains that pull factors include an array of possibilities which can include “a new experience or challenge” in a foreign destination; following a partner/spouse; a better “future of their children”; in search of extra education; or being enticed to the host country to travel. The research findings by Ochs (2011) were reiterated by Ekiss (2011) who succinctly noted that pull factors can be divided into three categories which include economic factors; social factors and political factors. Similarly, Manik (2013, p. 6) contended that Zimbabwean teachers have reported that they moved to South Africa due to socio-economic, educational and political reasons. De Villiers (2011, p. 54) has expanded on the number of pull factors and he points out that “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 more positive incentives in the host country, the more eager migrants are to relocate, pulling them to a new destination. The pull factors for this study were identified as economic, educational, and political.

### *Economic factors*

Several economic pull factors motivate teacher migration. These various reasons can be grouped into three main categories: work opportunities, a higher standard of living, and higher salaries.

### *Work opportunities and a higher standard of living*

Gabriel (2013, p. 1) states that “if an individual is unable to find employment in his home country, then the next alternative would be to look for another place that would be able to offer him or her employment.” He also explained that although a migrant may be employed, they may want to relocate to a place where they can have an improved standard of living and extra trade and industry opportunities. Thus, migration can be a result of limited or no employment in the home country. De Villiers’ (2011) study on teacher migrants found that South Africa is increasingly seen by Zimbabweans as a country to help them build a prosperous future, instead of a place of temporary relief and quick pay. For Zimbabweans, the pull factors for migration into South Africa are employment, geographical accessibility and the state of the economy in South Africa (Ekiss, 2011). The unemployment rate in South Africa is 24% compared to Zimbabwe’s 94% (ibid). South Africa’s minimum monthly wage is approximately 1,041 Rands (141 USD) compared to not

having a salary at all given that Zimbabwe has a high rate of unemployment.

#### *Higher salaries*

Sesnan (2011, p. 88), an authority on refugee teachers, revealed that “teachers will naturally try to go to where the money is. In every situation that he has worked in, there would have been no shortage of qualified teachers if a good salary had been offered for the job”. Similarly, Ochs (2011) revealed that an appealing remuneration was one of the motivating factors pulling Caribbean teachers to the United States. Manik’s (2005, p. 109) study also indicated that many South Africans were attracted to the value of the Pound in the United Kingdom “a simple conversion of 100 pounds to rands is an attractive proposition for a South Africa teacher”. Hence, money and its other professional benefits discussed below are appealing motives for teacher migration.

#### *Educational Reasons*

Teachers also migrate due to educational reasons for themselves and or their children in the host country. Places may provide more learning prospects for professional development (Gabriel, 2013). Host countries may also present educational opportunities for migrants’ children (Caravetti et al., 2014). Migrant teachers found that excellent schooling, cultural acquaintances, and language involvement for their children were encouraging pull factors into a new country. A study by Manik (2011b) indicated that Zimbabwean immigrants felt that the provision of higher education would facilitate the opportunity of them obtaining a job. She provided an example where one of her participants stated that his wish was to enrol for a post-graduate qualification to find a better job. Another participant stated that her immigration decision was influenced by a need to study a Cambridge training course, which was only offered in South Africa.

#### *Political Reasons*

Political factors which propel migration include gaining protection under the law, a right to vote, and freedom from persecution and safety (Ekiss, 2011). Politics has been linked to the stability of a country and South Africa is viewed as stable in comparison to Zimbabwe. Hammar et al. (2010, p. 282) state that the “strategies of regulation, sovereignty, state-making, and political violence have spurred both individual and mass physical displacement” in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean migrants choose to migrate to South Africa because of South Africa’s strong civil service and stable government stature. A participant in Ranger’s (2010) study, for example, indicated that although he was offered a position in the parliament in Harare, he chose to remain a scholar in South Africa because of the comparative political stability in the country.

#### *Social Reasons*

Ekiss (2011) added that social factors which lead to migration include assurance from family and friends, improved health care, enhanced educational chances, and spiritual acceptance. One of the most important attractions for people who migrate is “the prospect of freedom in various areas of life.” (Gabriel, 2013, p. 2) Muñiz et al (2010), however, describe the movement of individuals as also an outcome of the degree of social connectivity in a particular country. They explained that “migration is more likely between two places that have existing social connections between them than between places that are disconnected” (Muñiz et al 2010, p. 8). These connections, for example, could include family and/or friends. In this regard, Zimbabwe’s close geographic position to South Africa, with families located in both countries due to historical reasons, could provide a social link. Furthermore, destinations with familiar images, positive observations from

established migrants and the influence of family and friends have a greater likelihood of being chosen (Marino, 2008).

#### *Survival Migration*

Betts (2010, p. 4) provides an interesting theoretical dimension to migration in the African context, namely that of survival migration. He explained that survival migrants are “persons who are outside their country of origin because of an existential threat to which they have no access to a domestic remedy or resolution”. It can thus be understood that survival migrants believe that they are in a “catch-22” situation and have no alternative but to migrate to survive.

#### *Chain migration*

An essential aspect related to migrant selectivity is that of chain migration. This refers to the successive migration of families and relatives, following the initial move by the first migrants from a community (Muñiz et al, 2010). Here, “... family or friends migrate, a social network of data becomes mobile and moves back to the point of origin, which consequently decreases the obstacles to migration for any future migrants” (Muñiz et al, 2010, p. 8). Thus, when one person migrates to a destination, more people eventually leave their home country (origin) and join their friends or family in this new destination, a result of the flow of positive information back to family and friends (Moffet, 2014) who feel ‘relative deprivation’ and aspire to acquire what the migrants have achieved.

#### **Context of the study**

The study was undertaken in Johannesburg, South Africa amongst primary school teachers located in both public and private schools. Gauteng is one of the nine provinces that make up South Africa. Johannesburg is the largest urban hub and the most densely inhabited of all South Africa's cities and is

located within the province of Gauteng. It is also the provincial capital of Gauteng. There are 480 public primary schools and 180 independent primary schools in Johannesburg (DBE, 2012, p. 6). This study draws on a convenience sample of migrant teachers from primary schools.

#### **Methodology**

This paper is part of a broader study that aimed to explore the reasons for locating in Johannesburg and for teaching in primary schools. It also covered the school experiences of migrant teachers. This paper focuses on the first question of why migrant teachers are in Johannesburg. We argue that they are attempting to survive by escaping an unbearable socio-economic and political climate in favour of a multitude of positive socio-economic and political conditions in Johannesburg, perceived as a city just a stone throw away from the despair of Zimbabwe.

#### *Research Design*

The study was qualitative, and it falls within the interpretive paradigm because it stresses the importance of understanding individual perceptions of their reality. There are many different types of qualitative research (Daymon and Holloway, 2011, p. 121), but the objectives of the study resonated with a case study methodology. Stake (in McMillan and Schumacher, 2014, p. 370) defines a case study as “an in-depth analysis of a single entity. A case study may be especially suitable for learning more about a little known or poorly understood situation”. Two prime means of gathering data (face-to-face interviewing and a focus group discussion) were used to unpack the reasons that decided teachers to migrate to Johannesburg. According to McNamara (as cited by Valenzuela and Shrivastava, 2002, p. 2), “interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant’s experiences.

The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic". Semi-structured interviews resonated with the study's objectives and detailed questions were formulated ahead of time, allowing for the interviewer to pursue a line of questioning. It also allowed the interviewee to slowly be drawn in via probing.

Focus Group discussions are also significant in eliciting data in particular circumstances. Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p. 148) cite Creswell and Neuman who state that "focus groups are particularly valuable when time is inadequate; participants feel more at ease speaking in a group than alone...". One focus group session was conducted in this study to gather richer more detailed information on the topics that emerged from the interviews to strengthen and enhance the data. The focus group discussion, comprising five immigrant teachers, was held in a boardroom at a primary school in Johannesburg and the duration was one hour.

Non-probability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research. An appropriate sample size for a qualitative study "is one that adequately answers the research question" (Marshall, 1996, p. 523). In this study, the sample size of 10 participants was adequate to achieve data saturation. There are different sampling techniques, but purposive sampling led to snowball sampling. Purposive sampling, as defined by Punch (2005, p. 187), is sampling in a "deliberate way, with some purpose or focus in mind".

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the data generated. Initial broad categories were determined by the objectives of the research and the literature (a priori categories). Specific categories were then developed from a detailed examination of the data after transcription. The process that

followed then was the identification of frequent or significant themes, words and phrases. Labels were assigned to categories to identify their content and meaning. The themes that were developed from the data in the broader study included: job opportunities, transport accessibility, migrants as tied movers and social networks. In this part of the research, the themes were centred on economic, political and economic reasons for teacher migrancy.

### **Findings**

The biographical profile of the participants (n=10) revealed that the majority of teachers were from Zimbabwe (n=7) and they were married (n=8). The majority (n=6) were from the age group 40-49 years indicating that they were older teachers and they had more than 5 years of teaching experience marking them as seasoned teachers. The migrant teachers all taught in primary schools, and they revealed multiple, sometimes intersecting reasons that led to their decision to be in Johannesburg.

#### *Economic reasons*

In this study, the participants (n=6) came to South Africa for financial gain. For example, Michael (interview) and Cathy (focus group discussion) were attracted by the availability of jobs in Johannesburg, which they had heard about from their family and friends. Michael (I, 3 – Zimbabwean national) remitted money to Zimbabwe so that his wife and children could meet their basic needs. Some migrant teachers viewed South Africa's economy as being stable in comparison to their home country and they had therefore decided to emigrate to the closest urban centre in South Africa where they would be able to secure employment. Cathy (FGD, 1 – Zimbabwean national) was firm in her decision that despite her feelings of loneliness and homesickness in

Johannesburg, she would not return to Zimbabwe:

*I think all of us are here for economic reasons because we know that if we go back, we are not going to be able to sustain our families as much as we can here. So, we are only here in this country for economic reasons. If we had a choice, if things were good back home, we will all want to go back!*

The 'we' in Cathy's statements, indicates her view that all Zimbabwean teachers share the same feeling as her and the view that Zimbabweans are only in South Africa to seek financial stability to provide sustenance for their families. Sikana (FGD, 2 – Zimbabwean national) referred to herself as an economic refugee and the definition of the term 'economic refugee' was explained by Cathy (FGD, 1 – Zimbabwean national):

*...We want to be in our country but we can't because of economic reasons. We're not here because we don't like our country, so we call ourselves economic refugees because the reasons that brought us here are economic.*

It is evident from the above extract that Cathy refers to Zimbabwe as "our country" implying that Zimbabwe is still recognised as their home and not South Africa. She states, on behalf of all Zimbabweans, that economics is the reason for their emigration. It is well known that the economic downturn in Zimbabwe is a result of the politics in the country.

#### *Political reasons*

Political turmoil in Zimbabwe led to some Zimbabwean teachers choosing to migrate to South Africa and Johannesburg is the closest and largest cosmopolitan environment where there would be opportunities for a better life.

Sikana (I, 1 – Zimbabwean national) explains:

*I had businesses and they flopped...and also, I had already a daughter in South Africa. She was at Western Cape University and I couldn't afford to pay for her fees when the Zimbabwean dollar was tumbling down.*

The politics of Zimbabwe affected businesses to such an extent that despite having several businesses, she became financially unstable. In addition, she needed to support her daughter in South Africa. She thus chose to emigrate to South Africa, as she could not see the politics improving soon.

#### *Social networks, education and a positive climate*

Another reason why migrant teachers have chosen to migrate to Johannesburg is due to their social networks in Gauteng. They have family and friends who have previously migrated to Johannesburg and established a social network. For example, Michael (I, 4 – Zimbabwean national) stated,

*I arrived here in this area because there was a relative of mine who was staying in this area. So, you see, I then looked around and found employment here and that's why I'm still here.*

Michael's main reason for heading to Johannesburg was socially influenced by the fact that he had a relative in the same area. He felt comfortable being in a new environment only where there was an established familiar element. Similarly, Happy (FGD, 3), a primary school trained teacher with six years of teaching experience explained that "It was family that brought me, so they were looking after me during that time, so it was not like things were hard for me." She had an extensive family network in the Johannesburg area that was able to take care of her and meet her daily needs whilst she searched for employment in primary schools.

Happy (I, 5) further explained that economic hardships in Zimbabwe had led her to search for greener pastures in South Africa, mainly in the Johannesburg area. She elaborated on the socioeconomic hardships which prompted her migration to South Africa: that the living conditions, medical provisions, food and salary in Zimbabwe were inadequate to maintain a comfortable standard of living. She further explained, “At times you would have the money, but you can’t have anything to buy” because the shops are inadequately stocked. Happy’s testimony shows how the different reasons for migrating to Johannesburg intersect. Her choice to relocate to South Africa was influenced by her social networks and South Africa’s stable economy.

Sikana and her husband had to emigrate to South Africa to find employment to survive (she was a teacher) and to afford to pay for their firstborn’s university fees as she continued her studies in South Africa. Theirs was a family migration to address all their members’ needs. Educational enrolment in a higher education institution was also of relevance for migrants as well as their children. A South African education is highly regarded in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Her daughter, who was in South Africa studying, eventually achieved educational success and Sikana was optimistic when she left Zimbabwe that she would be successful in South Africa because her daughter was climbing the educational ladder successfully. She went on to say,

*My coming to South Africa made everything possible because in 2010, she graduated with her PhD. That’s why I’m so positive about South Africa...I’m very positive about South Africa because it has brought up my children. The other one went to the UK and graduated...from here and she graduated at*

*Oxford University in Finance: Accounting and Finance and it’s all coming from South Africa. That’s why I’m saying, I’m very positive about South Africa because it has educated my children.*

Sikana’s constant repetition of the word ‘positive’ indicates that she is clearly very grateful for the quality of education that her children have received from South Africa and she is indeed a proud mother of graduated children in critical skills areas.

Sheila’s (I, 8 – Indian nationality) daughter was enrolled at a university in Johannesburg close to her accommodation. She studied chemical engineering. Her daughter, is now qualified, resides and is employed in Canada. Michael (I, 4 – Zimbabwean national) is currently studying towards his PhD through the University of Johannesburg and is only able to pay for his studies because he is employed in South Africa.

## Discussion of Findings

The migrant teachers who participated in this study emigrated to Johannesburg mainly for financial (economic), social and political reasons which will be explained in more detail below. Half of the teachers in the overarching study emigrated to South Africa to achieve greater economic and political stability. They also came for educational opportunities and joined existing social networks in Johannesburg. The other half entered by virtue of being ‘tied movers’. This phenomenon, however, is not within the scope of this paper and is dealt with elsewhere.

### *Economic Stability*

Cathy (FGD, 1 – Zimbabwean national) linked the push and pull factors of the economy when she stated that the unstable economy in Zimbabwe influenced her decision to migrate to South Africa which has



a relatively stable economy. Michael's situation of earning to remit is in keeping with Kriger's findings (2010, p. 77) that many Zimbabweans are "looking to find work to help their families at home to survive". Similarly, Manik (2011b, p. 83) argues that "in respect of the economic climate in Zimbabwe, participants revealed that inflation was high, salaries were too low for a family to survive on, some were working without being paid a salary, and even when there was adequate money in terms of the salary, the shops did not stock essential merchandise for daily needs". Manik (2011, p. 84), goes on to explain that one of her participants mentioned that they were "earning US\$100 per month as a family person and they felt that the salary was too little". The term 'economic migrant' refers to somebody who has emigrated from one country to another country for various reasons related to money such as better job opportunities or enhanced financial status (Alexander, 2012). The majority of the Zimbabwean participants saw themselves as economic refugees. In this study, economics was also a key factor attracting Zimbabwean migrant teachers, some of whom are desperate to support their families in their home country. Thus, many of them were what Betts (2010) referred to as 'survival migrants.'

Appleton et al. (2006, p. 778) state in their study that "higher salary was the leading reason for working abroad as given by the migrant teachers". Migration becomes a possibility when teachers think of the huge salary gaps between what they could be receiving in another country compared to what they are presently receiving in their home country. Crush (2014) concurs with Appleton et al. (2006), stating that most of the Zimbabwean migrants in the 1990's perceived South Africa as a place to assist their families to manage poor financial

circumstances and poor opportunities in Zimbabwe. He further explained that when Zimbabweans were asked to state which country they preferred between Zimbabwe and South Africa; Zimbabwe was regarded as the best except for the accessibility of employment and merchandise. This is in keeping with the findings from my study where Happy (I, 4 – Zimbabwean national) stated how difficult it was to find food because of the shortage of stock in shops and her low salary that pushed her to migrate to South Africa. Thus, the salary in South Africa, together with the availability of food supplies that can be purchased, are strong economic pull factors and with Johannesburg being the nearest urban hub to Zimbabwe, it is a magnet.

The participants from Zimbabwe are mainly in South Africa to be able to support their families with the income they receive from being employed in Johannesburg. Sheila (I, 8) stated that she and her husband relocated to South Africa because of an attractive job market and better living conditions in Johannesburg. Although they experience loneliness and feelings of isolation, their economic well-being is prioritised, and it takes precedence over their emotional well-being. They were desperate to earn money in South Africa so that they could improve not only their lives but also the lives of their loved ones.

### *The push and pull of politics*

Politics were also significant as push (from Zimbabwe) and pull (to Johannesburg, South Africa) factors. Sikana (I, 1 – Zimbabwean national) stated that her reason for leaving Zimbabwe and relocating to Johannesburg was because her businesses had 'flopped' due to the political turmoil in the country. Sikana had to migrate to South Africa as her businesses liquidated and she could no longer

sustain her family's needs because the Zimbabwean dollar had depreciated. Other studies have expanded this understanding of the impact of the political situation in Zimbabwe. According to Manik's (2011b:82) study, being a teacher and being involved with the opposition party (Movement for Democratic Change - MDC) was not tolerated, as education is controlled by the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and such teachers were asked to resign. The teachers in this study contended that education is controlled by the government in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, studies have indicated that in Zimbabwe, human rights violations are perpetrated by the government. They have violated several key human rights, including the right to life, property and freedom of movement. There are strict restrictions on freedom of speech, assembly, and the press. Although Zimbabwe still holds elections, they are not free, fair, and are frequently seen as fraudulent (Banerjee, 2018). While the participants in this study, did not mention the role of the political parties in their migration decisions, political turmoil still motivates their move as the erosion of the value of the Zimbabwe dollar has been linked to these political issues (Zimbabwe Independent, 2019). The Zimbabwean dollar is the least valued of all currency units in the world and this impacted the participants of this study as Sikana's articulations of her businesses failing in Zimbabwe demonstrate.

#### *Social network support and provision of education*

Social networks have an encouraging impact on cross-border migrants' happiness. Belonging to a network intensifies "migrants' resilience to social and economic shocks" (Mazars et al 2013, p. 7). Relationships (with friends and family) in South Africa, helped many participants to feel comfortable in

Johannesburg. In this study, the closeness of family and friends was one of the key reasons that led migrant teachers to relocate to Johannesburg.

Sikana (I, 1 – Zimbabwean national) brought her children to complete their secondary and tertiary studies at a university in South Africa. Before the Zimbabwean economy had started performing very poorly, Sikana had already registered her daughter as a student at the University of the Western Cape because she could afford the fees and it was highly regarded. However, when the Zimbabwean economy started a downward spiral and her business profit margin had decreased, she deliberated on the situation and found a solution. Sikana and her husband then migrated to South Africa to earn an income so that they could continue paying for their daughter's university fees which had then become an enormous burden.

The political and economic situation in Zimbabwe affected education for Sikana's family. Politics has had a ripple effect on education in Zimbabwe (Manik, 2011b). Current literature on the state of education in Zimbabwe shows that around 75 per cent of state schools are not functioning properly in Zimbabwe because the majority of state teachers are not working due to inadequate pay which makes it impossible to provide for their basic needs, forcing them to look for or work for food (Zimbabwe and South Africa, n.d). By contrast, educational opportunities in South Africa seem affordable as the migrant teachers in this research were able to study (Michael) and others could afford to send their children to university, which otherwise would have been impossible in their home country. Sikana's (I, 2 – Zimbabwean national) eldest daughter is now qualified in Medical Science and her second-born has a degree in Accounting and Finance, all from South African institutions. Hence,

the quality of higher education seems high as Sheila and Sikana's daughters are both working overseas with qualifications obtained in South Africa.

### Some insights and conclusions

In the cohort of migrant teachers who were teaching in primary schools in Johannesburg, Zimbabweans dominated. The majority of the participants also fell in the age group of 40-49 years. They were qualified, seasoned teachers. This is consistent with the finding by Keevy et al. (2014) that the majority of migrant teachers across SA are Zimbabweans. Johannesburg is presented as a city of hope for migrant teachers. We have argued that Zimbabwean teachers are trying to survive by escaping an unbearable socio-economic and political environment in favour of a multitude of favourable socio-economic and political conditions in Johannesburg – a city of hope, just a stone throw away from the hopelessness of Zimbabwe.

South Africa is benefitting from this brain gain. Teachers are a highly skilled group and should be welcomed for their knowledge and skills. Migrant teachers in this sample are seasoned teachers but the majority were on contract positions in Johannesburg. They were filling teacher shortages in the primary school labour market. Given their commitment to contributing to the economy, addressing Zimbabwean teachers' needs, as part of the teaching force is important. Hence, the Department of Basic Education needs to consider maximising this 'brain gain'.

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