SOUTH–SOUTH MIGRATION OF ZIMBABWEAN TEACHERS: MOTIVES FOR MIGRATION AND FUTURE CAREER PLANS

J. de Villiers¹, Z. Weda²

¹ University of Pretoria (SOUTH AFRICA)
² St.Charles College (SOUTH AFRICA)

Abstract

In sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa is a popular choice for migrant workers from the region. Zimbabwe has been experiencing socio-economic and political turmoil since the turn of the century, which has led to an exodus of its citizens. The choice of Zimbabwean teachers as participants in this study was motivated by them constituting the largest percentage of migrant teachers in South Africa’s education system. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the Zimbabwean teachers’ motives for migration to South Africa, the challenges in finding employment as a teacher and their future career plans. Fifteen migrant Zimbabwean teachers in public high or combined schools (private schools) took part in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. The data were analysed qualitatively using open coding. The findings revealed that the economic and political instability in Zimbabwe (a push factor) played a much stronger role in migration decisions of the migrant teachers than the pull factors such as the close proximity of South Africa, and the existence of a migration network in South Africa. The findings of the study also revealed that some of the migrant Zimbabwean teachers migrated to reunite with their families as they preferred not to split their immediate families between two countries. Migration networks were effective in assisting the migrant to find employment. They faced divergent practical employment challenges, such as underpaid contracts, temporary posts, long duration before employment, visa documents not in order and having no work permit. The future plans of the majority of the teachers were ambitious they involved improving their academic qualifications, getting employment in the tertiary education sector and migrating to other better paying countries. Inward teacher migration is a significant contributor to teacher supply in South Africa. The migration of Zimbabwean teachers to South Africa is an enormous benefit to the South African education system, as they are able to assist in addressing skills gaps in schools.

Keywords: Migration, South Africa, Zimbabwean teachers.