

IMMIGRANT TEACHERS IN SOUTH AFRICA: PROFESSIONAL NEEDS AND ADVICE TO THEIR COMPATRIOTS

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Abstract

Migrants consider South Africa to be a country of greener pastures in a sub-region blighted by political and economic instability. In South Africa's education system, Zimbabwean teachers constitute the largest group of migrant teachers. Although Zimbabwean teachers have become an integral part of the South African education system, no research directed at their social and professional needs has been carried out. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the social and professional needs of migrant Zimbabwean teachers, and their advice to prospective migrant teachers. Convenient, purposive and snowball sampling were used to select the teachers in the Gauteng Province. Fifteen migrant Zimbabwean teachers in public high schools or combined schools (private schools) took part in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. The audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim, where after the data were analysed qualitatively using open coding. The research instrument was validated by experts in the field and piloted. The majority of the teachers were teaching mathematics and science related subjects (Life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Natural Sciences) at the time of the study. The findings of the study revealed that these migrant teachers needed support to overcome difficulties in classroom management, in acquiring legal documentation, and in dealing with the issues of safety and xenophobia. The findings also revealed that the teachers were in need of induction, professional development, and social and financial support. With this information, prospective migrant teachers could thus make better informed decisions and weigh the cost-benefit of migration more accurately. In spite of their many needs, the migrant teachers' advice to prospective migrant teachers was that they should try their luck in South Africa. The next cohort of migrant teachers to South Africa could be greatly influenced by the experiences and advice that they receive from the present group of migrant teachers. Both the South African government and the Department of Education should affirm migrant teachers' value.

Keywords: *Migration, mobility, needs, South Africa, Zimbabwean teachers.*
