Migration and Mobility of South African Teachers: A Case Study

Authors : Rian de Villiers

Abstract : Human mobility is one of the most significant development, foreign policy and domestic issues in the world today. Teacher loss due to migration is a global phenomenon that is impacting both developed and developing nations the world over. The purpose of this study was to find out how many newly qualified South African teachers were planning to teach in a foreign country; what were the prospective migrant teachers' motives for migration; what destination countries were the most popular and why; and what were the prospective migrant teachers' information needs before leaving South Africa. A group of final-year Bachelor of Education student teachers from a single university responded to a questionnaire on intra-and intercontinental migration. The responses were analysed quantitatively and/or qualitatively. The findings showed that 79% of the students indicated that they would be teaching in South Africa, 9% were planning to teach in another country, while 8% were undecided. More than a third of the students (38%) said that they would like to teach in another country in five years time. Just more than a quarter of the students (27%) preferred Australia as a destination, followed by the United Kingdom (16%), Korea (16%) and the USA (14%). The student teachers' most important motive to teach in a foreign country was the opportunity to travel (27%), followed by earning a higher salary (26%) and professional development (23%). The student teachers indicated that their most important migration needs before leaving South Africa were information about health care, accommodation and banking assistance. Huge loss of teachers to host countries has a serious, negative impact upon the education system of most developing and/or source countries, including South Africa. Several steps and strategies to resolve teacher loss in South Africa are discussed.

Keywords : migration, academic mobility, teachers, teacher students, South Africa
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