

Hanging On by a Thread: The Case of Migrant Teachers Holding Zimbabwean Exemption Permits in South Africa

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SUMMARY

This paper drew from a qualitative study on the experiences of Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa. Using the interpretivist paradigm, the author interrogates the experiences of Zimbabwean migrant teachers who hold the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit. The author relies on the theory of migration by seminal scholar Everett Lee for a theoretical lens. The study was carried out within the context of respite¹ for Zimbabwe Exemption Permits holders. The respite for Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders was to terminate on 31 December 2022. Narrative interviews were carried out with ten purposively selected participants. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The study suggested that Zimbabwean migrant teachers were struggling to transfer to mainstream visas after the non-extension of the special visas they were holding (critical skill visas, general work visas). Due to these struggles, there was a shared view among the participants that after 31 December 2022 they would become undocumented. This was expected to change the lives of previously documented migrants. The impending fate of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders led to the conclusion that their lives were hanging on by a thread. The author recommends that the fate of the documentation for Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa be reassessed in terms of permanent residency status.

KEY WORDS: Zimbabwean migrant teachers, Zimbabwe Exemption Permit, undocumented migrants, South Africa

¹ The term “respite” is used in a legal sense. Respite entails temporary relief from a difficult situation. Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders were granted respite up to the end of 2022. However, in the meantime, it has been further extended to June 2023.

BACKGROUND

There is a plethora of research on the experiences of Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa. Those studies focused on various aspects, including the push and pull factors of migration and the challenges encountered by Zimbabwean migrants (De Villiers and Weda, 2017; Tarisayi and Manik, 2021). There is a consensus in the discourse that the apparent increase in the number of Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa is related to the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. The crisis in Zimbabwe has forced large numbers of people to emigrate to Europe, the United States of America, Australia, South Africa, and other parts of the world (Chiumba and Musaparara, 2012; Pasura, 2014). Additionally, South Africa has provided sanctuary for Zimbabweans, both skilled and unskilled, legal and illegal. Migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa is consistent with the “dual frame of reference”, “whereby employment conditions abroad are evaluated against job opportunities in the home country” (Berntsen, 2016: 4). The dual frame of reference is premised on the income disparities between the sending and receiving countries. Due to the mentioned political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe, there are income disparities that make South Africa an attractive destination.

Although there is a lack of agreement on the number of Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa, it has apparently increased over the last decade. While there might be no consensus on the statistics on migrant teachers, de Villiers and Weda (2017) and Tarisayi and Manik (2020) noted that the largest number of foreign teachers in South Africa were from Zimbabwe. Weda and Lemmer (2014: 416) observed that “accurate Zimbabwe teacher migration statistics are hard to come by because no comprehensive records have been kept and because of the sometimes clandestine nature of the migration.” Essentially, the literature (Tarisayi and Manik, 2021; Weda and Lemmer, 2014) notes the lack of comprehensive statistics on migrants in general and migrant teachers in South Africa. However, in court papers filed in the High Court, Case Number: 32323/22, the Minister of the Department of Home Affairs estimated that there were 1.5 million undocumented Zimbabweans in South Africa in 2009, thus justifying the introduction of the Dispensation of Zimbabweans Project (DZP). De Villiers and Weda (2017: 3) noted that the unavailability of reliable statistics on migrant teachers in South Africa resulted from “the unstable and transitory nature of employment of migrant teachers in South Africa.” Additionally, migrant teachers’ statistics in South Africa are difficult to ascertain due to decentralisation in

the recruitment of teachers in South Africa. Makonye (2017) revealed that before 2008, Zimbabwean migrant teachers were mainly employed in private colleges. However, this paper does not seek to engage in the debate on the statistics on Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa, nor does it focus on the push and pull factors of migration. This paper explores the narratives of selected Zimbabwean migrant teachers who hold Zimbabwean Exemption Permits.² This qualitative narrative research was carried out at a time when the Zimbabwean Exemption Permit was scheduled to be terminated. The paper is subdivided into several sections covering the background of migrant teachers in South Africa, contextualisation of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits, theoretical framework, research methodology and, lastly, presentation and analysis of findings.

Some scholarly work has focused on the challenges and experiences of Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa. Makonye (2017) established that some Zimbabwean migrant teachers experienced tensions while teaching mathematics in South Africa. Furthermore, Makonye (2017) noted that Zimbabwean migrant teachers working in private colleges tended to be paid lower salaries than the civil service. Essentially, private colleges were viewed as exploitative of migrant teachers who were in a desperate position. In addition, a study by Manik (2014) noted a lack of job security for Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South African schools. The above studies established that Zimbabwean migrant teachers were in unfair employment contracts.

Another overarching theme emerging from studies on Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa reveals various forms of discrimination. As Manik (2014: 113) argues, “xenophobic tendencies are from some teachers who see migrant teachers as a threat, particularly those less qualified and incompetent in teaching.” At the same time, Tarisayi and Manik (2020) opine that discrimination and xenophobia directed towards migrant teachers were slightly different from xenophobia witnessed in the wider South African society. Discrimination and xenophobia in school spaces were subtle as compared to the wider society, where outbreaks of violence have occurred. South Africa has witnessed recurring episodes of violent attacks targeting migrants over the past couple of years (2008, 2015, and 2019). Manik (2014: 171) noted that Zimbabwean migrant teachers experienced “a complex and

² Zimbabwe Exemption Permits were valid for only four years when they were introduced at the end of 2017. However, their validity was initially extended to December 2021. The permits have since been extended to July 2023.

frustrating process of acquiring documentation to enter SA's labour market legally, difficulty in acquiring job security, xenophobic attitudes by locals, and workplace exploitation." Fundamentally, these studies reveal various challenges that Zimbabwean migrant teachers must navigate to survive in South Africa. Hence, de Villiers and Weda (2018) argue that Zimbabwean migrant teachers need support to overcome difficulties in South Africa. The studies also suggest that the vulnerability of Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa has a negative impact on their professional lives (Manik 2014; Tarisayi and Manik, 2020). The findings of these studies suggest that South Africa is a minefield for Zimbabwean migrant teachers as they navigate the numerous challenges lurking underneath. However, it can be noted that these studies were not carried out within the context of Zimbabwean migrant teachers threatened by the termination of their documented status. The narratives in this study are premised on the uncertainties created by the Cabinet's decision to terminate the Zimbabwean Exemption Permit on 31 December 2022.

THE EVOLUTION OF SPECIAL PERMITS FOR ZIMBABWEAN MIGRANTS

Special arrangements for Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa were inaugurated in 2009. Before granting amnesty to Zimbabwean migrants in 2009, amnesty had been granted in South Africa in three other instances between 1996 and 2000 (Perbedy, 2001). These amnesties offered permanent residence status to migrants who had stayed in South Africa for a certain period. Unlike the earlier amnesties, the Zimbabwe Documentation Project did not offer permanent residence status and thus can be viewed as a stop-gap measure. Any arrangement that does not create a path towards permanent residence status for migrants is essentially temporary, as evidently revealed by the need to establish and maintain subsequent dispensations for Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa. The Zimbabwe Exemption Permit is a successor to other special permits created for Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa. The Cabinet started the Dispensation of Zimbabwe Project (DZP) in April 2009 to provide asylum to Zimbabwean migrants. Later, the Zimbabwe Documentation Project morphed into the Zimbabwe Special Permit (ZSP). Thebe (2017) reveals that the Zimbabwe Special Dispensation Permit granted amnesty to Zimbabweans who had already resided in South Africa. Amnesty was granted through legislation passed by the government in September 2010. The Zimbabwe Special Dispensation Permits were valid

for four years. In August 2014, they were succeeded by the Zimbabwe Special Permits, which were valid for three years until they expired on 31 December 2017.

The Zimbabwe Special Permits were replaced by the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits, which are the focus of this study. As Bekker (2022) states, "The DZP, which since changed to the Zimbabwe Special Permit (ZSP), has provided legal protection to an estimated 182 000 Zimbabwean nationals to live, work and study in South Africa." However, the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit will terminate on 31 December 2022. Essentially, their termination removes the legal protection previously accorded to the holders. It will render the previously documented migrants undocumented should they fail to transfer to other permits as advised by the Department of Home Affairs. Holders of Zimbabwe Exemption Permits were given a year's grace period to migrate to other permits. However, this leads to the question: why was special dispensation established in the first place if the migrants qualified for other types of permits? Special dispensation was established to regularise the previously undocumented Zimbabwean migrants who were not eligible to obtain mainstream permits. Between 2009 and 2021, a number of special permit arrangements were made for Zimbabwean migrants. Central to these arrangements was legalising their stay in South Africa. However, it is also interesting to note that, unlike other visas granted in South Africa, these special permits did not qualify the holder for permanent residency regardless of the time spent in South Africa. Nor did the special permits allow for a change of visa conditions like other visas. The following section discusses the theoretical framework that guided this paper.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The author of this paper draws from the seminal work of Everett Lee. Lee (1966) attempted to provide a theory of migration by emphasising push and pull factors, the difficulties migrants faced, and migrant profiling (age, gender, class, education). He conceptualised the factors associated with the decision to migrate and the process of migration into the following four categories: (1) factors associated with the area of origin; (2) factors associated with the area of destination; (3) intervening obstacles; and (4) personal factors. According to Lee's work, migrants face challenges that are conceptualised as intervening obstacles. Examples of intervening obstacles include mountains, forests, deserts, cities and bodies of water. However, in

the 1960s, when the theory was propounded, intervening obstacles were mainly physical barriers such as rivers, mountains and so forth. In their seminal overview of migration theories, Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino and Taylor (1993: 432) concluded that much reflection on migration “remains mired in nineteenth-century concepts, models, and assumptions.” Therefore, the author of this paper argues that legal impediments for migrants also constitute intervening obstacles. Concurring with Massey et al. (1993), the author revises the application of the theory of migration and extends it to consider legal impediments as intervening obstacles in the lives of migrants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study falls within the interpretivist paradigm. Neuman (2011: 102) defines the interpretivist paradigm as “the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds.” Essentially, the interpretivist paradigm allowed the researcher to understand the Zimbabwean migrant teachers’ social world. Additionally, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017: 19) aver that the interpretivist paradigm “is characterized by a concern for the individual.” The researcher focused on understanding the individual experience of Zimbabwean migrant teachers while waiting for the termination of their documented status. This paper builds on earlier work by the researcher on the experiences of Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa (Tarisayi and Manik, 2021). The purpose of the study was to explore the narratives of Zimbabwean migrant teachers on the impending termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits. Creswell and Poth (2018: 68) state that “narrative researchers collect stories from individuals (and documents and group conversations) about individuals’ lived and told experiences.” Thus, in this study, the researcher collected the stories of Zimbabwean migrant teachers living in Kwazulu-Natal and Eastern Cape provinces in South Africa. Josselson (2011: 224) argues that “narrative research takes a premise that people live and/or understand their lives in storied forms, connecting events in the manner of a plot that has a beginning, middle, and end points.” The Zimbabwean migrant teachers who participated in this study were included for their understanding of the changes in the Zimbabwean Exemption Permits by being beneficiaries of the permit dispensation. Essentially, this study was premised on their lived experiences.

Hong (2011: iii, cf. Colaizzi, 1978) argues that a person's lived experience "is the individual's expressions of his/her singular view of the everyday world conveyed in words, personal feelings, attitudes, and behaviours." The lived experiences of Zimbabwean migrant teachers are presented as narratives. Josselson (2011: 227) states that "the construction of the story reflects the current internal world of the narrator as well as aspects of the social world in which he or she lives." Zimbabwean migrant teachers' narratives were analysed using thematic analysis. Guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines, the researcher became familiarised with the data, generated the initial codes, searched for themes, reviewed themes, defined themes and wrote up the findings. The following themes emerged from the analysis: potential increase in undocumented migrants; learning to be illegal; court case and change of life. Each of the themes was supported by verbatim narrations. The researcher carried out ten narrative interviews with participants selected from two provinces of South Africa. The participants were purposively selected. Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012: 100) state "that qualitative researchers prefer purposive sampling since it allows them to use their personal judgments to select participants that they believe will provide the data they need." Furthermore, Patton (2012: 478) adds that "purposive sampling seeks information-rich cases which can be studied in-depth." Thus, purposive sampling entails the identification and utilisation of information-rich cases a researcher can study thoroughly, which resonated with the present study. All the participants have been teaching in South Africa since 2009 and are holders of Zimbabwe Exemption Permits. Pseudonyms were used for ethical reasons. Ethical clearance was granted by the University of Kwazulu-Natal (HSS/1074/018PD).

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

This section presents significant findings from the study. The findings were captured using recurring emerging themes from the interviews.

Increase in undocumented migrants

The participants in this study noted that the non-extension of the Zimbabwean Exemption Permits would increase the number of undocumented migrants in South Africa. One of the objectives of the special permit arrangement was to reduce the number of undocumented migrants in South Africa. A failure to migrate to other visas, as advised by the Minister of

Home Affairs, would translate into being undocumented when the grace period expires. Gonzales (2011: 602) noted that the substantial increase in undocumented migrants in the United States from 2.5 million to 11.1 million between 1987 to 2006 was due to “the unintended consequence of policies designed to curb undocumented migration and tighten the US–Mexico border.” Therefore, it can be argued that the impending termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit will lead to an increase in the number of undocumented migrants in South Africa. Consequently, the termination of the permits leads to losing the benefits that the country has accrued over the past two decades by documenting and regularising migration. Ultimately, the government will be forced to resume the deportation of undocumented Zimbabweans in South Africa. The challenges posed by the termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit coincide with the view by Didier Bigo that “...a prohibitionist policy creates more problems than it solves in as much as it does not prevent fraud but causes it to become professionalized” (Bigo, 2009: 581). The termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits can be viewed as a prohibitionist approach, especially given the narrations by the Zimbabwean migrant teachers that they are failing to migrate to other visas. Priscilla stated:

The minister gave us a grace period of one year to apply for other visas. We are grateful for the grace period but a failure to meet the requirements of these other visas is a major impediment. What it means is that after the 31st of December 2022, I will be one more undocumented migrant in South Africa.

Evident among the participants in this study was that unsuccessful attempts have been made to migrate to other visas. Tawanda argued:

I am not sure how the minister expects us to migrate to other visas when the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits were created to accommodate us after realizing that we did not meet the requirements. Special permits are for people who do have papers for critical skills and other visas. Somehow, we are now expected to meet the requirements which we previously didn't meet.

Therefore, the impending termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit inevitably takes the country a few steps back when it comes to the integration of migrants. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), documentation is an essential step towards the integration of migrants into a host country. The position of the International Organisation for Migration is informed by its 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) views integration as an essential component of effective and comprehensive migration management to promote social inclusion and good relations across diverse groups, thereby contributing to diverse yet inclusive and cohesive societies.

Learning to be illegal

The uncertainties for the Zimbabwean migrant teachers brought about by the impending termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits can be equated to the concept of “learning to be illegal” by Gonzales (2011). According to Gonzales (2011), young Latino adults in the United States of America transition from legal protection in childhood into being undocumented migrants in adulthood. Essentially, that “involves the almost complete retooling of daily routines, survival skills, aspirations, and social patterns” (Gonzales, 2011: 602). Similarly, the impending termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits entails an overhaul of the livelihood and survival strategies for Zimbabwean migrant teachers. The Permits enabled migrant teachers to be employed in schools. However, their termination renders them legally unemployable. Thus, previously documented Zimbabwean migrant teachers now must learn to be undocumented. Gemi (2017: 24) views the transition from being documented to undocumented as “befallen illegality.” Befallen illegality entails “situations whereby migrants face difficulties in renewing their permits” (Hatziprokopiou and Triandafyllidou, 2013: 16). However, befallen illegality usually results from the migrants failing to prove formal employment, unlike in the case of Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa. They have arguably become undocumented due to a change in government policy. Thus, the study contends that Zimbabwean migrant teachers holding Zimbabwe Exemption Permits will be rendered illegal by the government’s policy change. However, being undocumented comes with the obvious challenge of not being able to continue working in formal employment at schools. Thus, for Zimbabwean migrant teachers, part of learning to be undocumented entails joining the informal sector, already flooded by other undocumented migrants. This comes with struggles that Zimbabwean migrant teachers may not be prepared for since they are classroom practitioners. Additionally, it is interesting to note that some of these teachers were undocumented before the 2009 amnesty. Having endured the challenges of being undocumented, migrant teachers find the impending termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit traumatic. As narrated by Major:

Some of us have been in South Africa long enough to know what awaits us after 31 December 2022. The special permits allowed us to be documented and enjoy the protection of the law. Now, after the 31st of December 2022 we will be exposed to exploitation and ultimately deportation. It is traumatizing for me and my family that after teaching for two decades I need to uproot my life and go back to Zimbabwe.

The fears of some Zimbabwean migrant teachers who have failed to migrate to other visas are summed up by the above narration by Major. It was apparent that Zimbabwean migrant teachers feared becoming undocumented and illegal after many years of enjoying legal protection in South Africa. The following section discusses the participants' views on the legal battles to persuade the government of South Africa to reconsider their permits.

Court Case

The participants expressed scepticism about legal challenges mounted on their behalf. Major narrated:

...the court cases, whatever their outcome is, ultimately it is going to be costly on us as migrants. Right now, we are being labelled litigious by some sections. Taking on the minister is misconstrued as evidence of being ungrateful to our host. Yes, our rights as migrants need to be defended but the court route attracts unnecessary attention to Zimbabwean migrants.

This statement sums up the fears of some Zimbabwean migrant teachers related to suing the Minister of Home Affairs. According to it, going to court against a government department will be perceived as being ungrateful to your host. It is not even surprising that a Ministerial statement responded by saying, "The Minister hopes that sense will prevail and that the HSF [Helen Suzman Foundation] will opt for engagement rather than embark on a spurious court action, which can only lead to further tensions between citizens and foreign nationals" (Department of Home Affairs, 2022). The minister is fully aware of the growing tension between citizens and foreign nationals and that the court case is only exacerbating an already precarious situation. Regardless of the outcome of the court case, the minister's statement already views approaching the court as spurious. The minister further questions HSF's motives for meddling in the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit issue by saying, "South Africa is now under the dictatorship of some of the NGOs, some of them having faceless and dubious funders. Their ultimate aim is to assist in the dislodgement of the government of the day from pow-

er by all means available” (Department of Home Affairs, 2022). Essentially, the minister sees the court case and its backers as a threat to the government of South Africa. This view justifies the fears alluded to by the participants in this study. Going to court has fundamentally drawn unnecessary attention towards Zimbabwean migrants in general and Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders. Thus, it can be argued that approaching the courts for legal recourse by representatives of Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders is drawing unnecessary attention to Zimbabwean migrants. This may prove fatal in the event of outbreaks of violence against foreigners.

The pronouncements by the Minister of Home Affairs regarding the termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits have also spotlighted Zimbabwean migrants in general and Zimbabwean migrant teachers in specific. The spotlight threatens one of the main survival strategies of Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa. Tarisayi and Manik (2021) established that those Zimbabwean migrant teachers survived by “flying under the radar”, which entails avoiding unnecessary attention. Brenda narrated:

The minister’s announcement and speeches on the termination of our permits have received wide coverage in the media. The issue has brought too much attention to Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa. The spotlight is negatively impacting us. There is now this view that all Zimbabweans should leave South Africa by the 31st of December 2022. This has exposed us and will ultimately make us vulnerable, especially in a country that has experienced xenophobia in the past.

There is growing concern among Zimbabwean migrant teachers who participated in this study that the media coverage of the minister’s announcements might render Zimbabwean migrant teachers vulnerable to xenophobia. The minister’s announcements, as well as the court cases, were viewed by the participants as spotlighting Zimbabwean migrants in general. Ruth commented:

Because of that court case [HSF], the only foreigners that are being talked about are Zimbabweans. It seems it’s now Zimbabweans vs. the minister. Naturally, the citizens will stand with their minister, and you never know how the citizens will show their solidarity with the minister. We will lose more from all the attention. It’s even worse to associate with organisations that are considered anti-government.

This view captures the fears of some Zimbabwean migrant teachers that they are now perceived as anti-governmental due to being represented in

court by the HSF. In the event of harm befalling Zimbabwean migrants, citizens will justify their actions by defending their government. The more so within the context of stereotypes that view foreigners as abusing the hospitality of South Africa and taking advantage of its constitution by lodging spurious court cases.

Another participant, Faith, remarked:

The courts and court orders will not be there to protect us in the townships. And the minister has been clear for some time now that there is no reversal of the termination of our permits. I don't have faith in the legal route. I lost hope when attempts to switch to another type of visa failed. We are certainly going to be deported.

It is evident from the above statement that the participant has no faith in the court cases mounted on behalf of Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders. There was consensus among the participants that they were going to be deported after the expiration of the grace period. Major explained:

*I am being haunted by thoughts of being deported on crowded trucks. I heard horrifying stories from migrants that were deported before 2009. Just imagine working for two decades and being sent home in a **gumba-kumba**. I never thought that one day the choice would be between being deported or going back home willingly.*

However, in his court papers in Case 32323/22 vs. HSF, the Minister of Home Affairs states, "Further, the alleged decision not to extend the ZEP past 31 December 2022 (which is not conceded) does not mean that ZEP holders will face deportation" (Paragraph 197, Case 32323/22). The minister, cognizant of these fears among Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders, argues in his court papers that there will be no mass deportation, but cases will be considered on an individual basis. However, it is interesting to note that the participants are sceptical despite these assurances.

Change of life

The participants revealed that they anticipated a change of life after the termination of their visas. Tawanda explained the unenviable position of Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders:

My life is going to shatter by the termination of my permit. I will obviously lose my job. The government is very clear on the employment of undocumented foreigners, so I will not blame the school. Once I lose my source of income, my

world will crumble. No money to pay for accommodation and other obligations. I will try to find other sources of income but that will be a struggle.

The Zimbabwe Exemption Permit enabled holders to work, study and run businesses in South Africa legally. With the impending termination of these permits, the participants indicated that they would lose their employment and, eventually, accommodation and properties. Drawing from the theory of migration by Lee (1966), the change of life attributed to the termination of permits for Zimbabwean migrant teachers can be viewed as an intervening obstacle. Despite the Department of Home Affairs' statements that they have always informed Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders of the temporary nature of their permits, it was apparent that Zimbabwean migrant teachers were expecting an extension or another special arrangement. This position is based on the previous extensions granted for over a decade. Other participants also indicated that their present accommodation was tied to the possession of a valid visa and, therefore, they would have to look for alternative accommodation. The participants' fears were also extended to losing access to their bank accounts. Most banks have already communicated with their clients who are holders of Zimbabwe Exemption Permits about the impending restrictions on their accounts after the expiry of their permits on 31 December 2022. Essentially, the lives of those who fail to migrate to other visas will crumble. Therefore, the author's view is that the lives of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders are hanging by a thread.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper draws from the narratives of Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa. The participants were holders of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits. The study was carried out within the context of the impending termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits on 31 December 2022 (technically, the permits expired on 31 December 2021, but holders were granted a one-year grace period). The participants' efforts to transfer to other visas, as advised by the minister, had been unsuccessful. The interviews shed light on the despair that the participants are living through as they await the inevitable on 31 December 2022. It was evident that the participants had lost hope and their continued stay in South Africa was hanging on by a thread. There was scepticism among the participants regarding the legal route taken by the HSF, among other organisations representing Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders. The Zimbabwean migrant teachers who partici-

pated in this study can be viewed as learning to be illegal as they prepare for life in South Africa as undocumented migrants. Essentially, this paper concludes that the challenges brought about by the non-extension of their permits were intervening obstacles, as noted in the theory of migration by Everett Lee. Additionally, in theory, the actions or inactions of the South African government have become intervening obstacles for the Zimbabwean migrant teachers. The study also noted that the termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit ultimately contributes to the increase in the number of undocumented migrants in South Africa. The participants narrated their struggles in applying for other visas and, essentially, it was evident that they were left with two options, going back to Zimbabwe or staying undocumented in South Africa. However, the state of being undocumented has severe repercussions for the previously documented Zimbabwean migrant teachers. The author recommends that the fate of the documentation for Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa be reassessed in terms of permanent residency status. Some Zimbabwean migrant teachers have been making significant contributions to the education landscape of South Africa for more than a decade. This commitment and dedication to the education system in South Africa justifiably fulfil the Zimbabwean migrant teacher's obligation to the host country as espoused by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Tarisayi and Manik (2020) reveal that the challenges faced by Zimbabwean migrant teachers are also shared by migrant children in South Africa. Essentially, addressing the documentation of Zimbabwean migrant teachers will ultimately ease the lives of their children and families in South Africa. Finally, based on the findings, it is recommended that another special arrangement be granted to Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders in the education system.

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Visjeti o niti: slučaj učitelja migranata sa zimbabveanskim dozvolama za izuzeće u Južnoj Africi

Kudzayi Savious Tarisayi

SAŽETAK

Ovaj se rad temelji na kvalitativnoj studiji o iskustvima učitelja migranata iz Zimbabvea u Republici Južnoj Africi. Služeći se interpretativnom paradigmatom, autor propituje iskustva učitelja migranata iz Zimbabvea koji imaju zimbabveanske dozvole za izuzeće te se koristi teorijom migracije Everetta Leeja kao teorijskim okvirom. Studija je provedena u kontekstu odgode dozvola za izuzeće za nositelje s danom 31. prosinca 2022. Provedeni su narativni intervjui s deset namjerno odabranih sudionika. Podaci su analizirani tematskom analizom. Iz studije je proizašlo da su učitelji migranti iz Zimbabvea imali problema s prelaskom na uobičajene vize nakon neproduženja posebnih viza koje su posjedovali (vize za kritične vještine, opće radne vize). Zbog tih problema među sudionicima je prevladalo mišljenje da će nakon 31. prosinca 2022. ostati bez dokumenata. Očekivalo se da će to što su bez dokumenata unijeti

promjene u živote migranata koji su prethodno imali dokumente. Nadolazeća sudbina nositelja dozvola za izuzeće iz Zimbabvea dovela je do zaključka da njihovi životi vise o niti. Autor savjetuje da se sudbina reguliranja dozvola zimbabveanskih učitelja migranata u Južnoj Africi ponovno procijeni u svjetlu statusa stalnog boravka.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: učitelji migranti iz Zimbabvea, zimbabveanska dozvola za izuzeće, migranti bez dokumenata, Republika Južna Afrika