Managing teacher migration

Implications for policy and practice in Africa

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Introduction

The migration of teachers has a considerable impact on the development of Africa. There is broad consensus among the international community about the need to create global and regional mechanisms to support a more equitable distribution of investment in education and training, and increase the benefits of employment created by international labour mobility. These needs are based on an understanding that migration could contribute to a large gain in human development globally; first, however, barriers to mobility have to be lowered and the treatment of migrants must improve (UNDP, 2009). Policies related to international migration are heavily influenced by public opinion and can often be misrepresented in political discourse (IOM, 2011a). This requires more effective communication of accurate information on the scale and socio-economic contexts of teacher mobility and recruitment, and their impacts on the education system.

In 2004, Commonwealth member states adopted the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol (CTRP), which aims to balance the rights of Commonwealth teachers to migrate internationally against the need to protect the integrity of national education systems and prevent the exploitation of scarce human resources in developing or low-income countries. The CTRP also recommends compliance with human rights principles described in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and Article 29 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which recognise the right to education. The CTRP can contribute to

the realisation of this right by facilitating teachers' mobility and international recruitment to fill teacher gaps across borders, whenever appropriate and – as outlined in the Protocol – agreed to by both recruiting and recruited parties in an ethical manner.

Migration flows

Available data on skilled emigration rates in 2000 indicate that many countries, particularly small states in Africa, are losing a high rate of their tertiary-educated population to other countries. These include Cape Verde (67.5 per cent), The Gambia (63.3 per cent), Mauritius (56.2 per cent), Seychelles (55.9 per cent), Sierra Leone (52.5 per cent), Ghana (46.9 per cent), Mozambique (45.1 per cent), Liberia (45 per cent), Kenya (38.4 per cent) and Uganda (35.6 per cent). North African countries, including Morocco (17 per cent) and Tunisia (12.5 per cent), also lost a relatively high rate of tertiary-educated people in the same year (World Bank, 2011).

Africa has high unemployment rates: on average during 2000–2009, these were 22.5 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 9.5 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa, as compared to the global rate of 5.8 per cent (World Bank, 2011). In this context, governments in Africa renewed their dialogue on migration in 2010 through various sub-regional meetings, such as the ministerial meeting of the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Regional Consultative Process (IGAD-RCP) in eastern Africa and the RCP for Central African countries (IOM, 2011a). In the East African Community (EAC), a Protocol establishing the East African Common Market that entered into force in July 2010 supports free movement of goods, labour, services and capital in the sub-region, and well-managed South-South migration is encouraged (IOM, 2011a). These initiatives address migration more generally as well as the specific case of teacher migration.

Teacher supply and demand; teacher loss

Despite wide acknowledgement of the important role that teachers play, current global teacher supply trends are not encouraging and many countries will not meet their projected demand for teachers (UIS, 2011). According to the Institute for Statistics (UIS) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the most severe teacher gaps are in Africa, where many students have to study in very crowded classrooms. While teacher shortages are seen across all levels of education, poor countries in particular are focusing their efforts on meeting the goal of universal primary education (UPE). Of the 2 million extra teachers needed

Box 1

Global and African migrant flows

International migrants in 2010 comprised 3 per cent of the global population, totalling 215 million. Of the migrants originating in Africa, some 30 million (about 3 per cent of the population) moved internationally. In sub-Saharan Africa, 24.8 per cent moved to high-income Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and only 2.5 per cent moved to high-income non-OECD countries. The majority (63 per cent) moved intra-regionally, with 70 per cent of the movement – mainly employment related – from West Africa to countries such as Burkina Faso, Kenya and South Africa. From North Africa, however, the majority (90 per cent) moved outside the region mainly to Europe (World Bank, 2011; IOM, 2011a).

between 2009 and 2015 to meet the UPE goals, more than half of them (55 per cent, or 1,115,000 teachers) are needed in sub-Saharan Africa (UIS, 2011), and the region 'will need to recruit a number of teachers equivalent to 76% of its current teaching force within the next years (from 2009 to 2015)' (ibid., p. 4)

From a sustainable development perspective, it is ideal to train and recruit sufficient teachers locally. This is not always possible, however, and countries often recruit foreign teachers to bridge the gap. Subsequent to increased student participation at the primary level, expansion of secondary and post-secondary education, as well as the growing influence of globalisation, the nature of teacher recruitment has changed globally. Such contextual factors have also influenced migration routes. For example, Kenya supplied science teachers at the secondary school level to Seychelles in 2000 and Rwanda in 2006 (see Box 2), but by 2008 many of these teachers had returned to Kenya and instead secondary science teachers were being deployed to South Africa and the Southern Sudan (Ochs and Jackson, 2009).

Teacher loss has a number of different causes, including foreign recruitment, career change and attrition (see Box 3). Political instability is another motivator for teacher mobility. According to

the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011*, 35 countries were affected by conflict between 1999 and 2008, of which half (17) were in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2011)[2]. Both national governments and the international community have failed to uphold human rights as armed conflicts have targeted school children and teachers, 'with almost total impunity' (ibid., p. 3), and the report calls for a concerted effort by education stakeholders to advocate for human rights more forcefully.

Some studies in Southern Africa suggest that the significance of teacher mobility on education systems has less to do with the quantitative effects (the numbers of trained teachers who move), but more to do with its qualitative effects (the kind of teachers who move) (Appleton, Sives and Morgan, 2006). Targeted recruitment is usually to address subject areas and levels that are underserved by the domestic teaching force, and it is often the most experienced teachers that are recruited (Ochs, 2003; Reid, 2006; Ochs and Jackson, 2009).

From a developmental perspective, issues around teacher loss, ramifications for the source country losing its teachers and the suitability of skills across different countries must be carefully considered. At the same time, studies have also reported on the

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Box 2

The Case of Rwanda

Education features prominently in Rwanda's medium-term Economic Poverty Reduction Strategy and long-term economic development plan, which seeks to raise the country to middle-income status by 2020. Rwanda became a member state of the East African Community (EAC) in 2007 and signed the Protocol on the establishment of the EAC Common Market, which includes guidelines for the free movement of workers, including teachers, within member countries. In 2008, the Government formally shifted to an English medium of instruction in its education system as this is largely perceived as the international language of the global knowledge economy. Also, in 2009, Rwanda became a member of the Commonwealth, further increasing the country's ties to English-speaking nations and resulting in a greater need for English-speaking teachers. Given the country's relatively small English footprint, most of these skills have to be recruited from outside the country (Muvunyi, 2011).

The recruitment of teachers to Rwanda is addressed by several stakeholders, including local education authorities, teachers' unions and associations, schools and training centres, the Teacher Service Commission and teachers themselves. Those recruited include former Rwandan refugees and volunteers. In 2011, Rwanda sent a formal request to Kenya for teachers to provide in-service training to its primary and secondary teachers. In 2009, it established agreements with Uganda to provide short-term English language teacher training. In this particular case, special attention was also given to the timing of the school year to fit in with the vacations of Rwandan teachers/trainees and Ugandan trainers to avoid disrupting the delivery of infrastructure and any negative impacts on the quality of education delivered to the children in both countries (Muvunyi, 2011).

Box 3

Five dimensions of teacher loss

In a pan-Commonwealth study, Ochs (2003) outlined five broad dimensions of teacher loss that are also applicable to the African context:

a) Recruitment to industrialised countries, e.g. Canada, the UK and the USA recruiting teachers from developing countries such as Ghana or Sierra Leone (Kamara, 2011), although the specific source countries can change due to contextual factors in both the source and destination country.

b) Recruitment to developing (often neighbouring) countries, such as the emigration of Ghanaian teachers to Botswana, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia (Bump, 2006).

c) Career change associated with teacher disaffection, due possibly to poor working conditions, inadequate salaries or lack of career opportunity.

d) 'Drifting', where teachers go to other countries to obtain qualifications and decide to stay. In some cases they continue teaching and in others they leave the profession but remain in the destination country. Some studies report migrant teachers' frustration with their placements and cases of 'brain waste', underutilising their skills, due to the difficulty in having their qualifications recognised (Ochs, 2003; Reid, 2006).

e) Teacher attrition, due to retirement or death (sometimes related to HIV and AIDS).

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics reports that about 6.1 million new teachers are needed world-wide between 2009 and 2015 to replace teachers leaving the profession; 'globally, attrition accounts for 74% of the 8.2 million of the teachers who need to be recruited' (UIS, 2011, p. 3).

benefits of migration, particularly in the form of 'return migration' or 'brain circulation', when teachers develop skills abroad that can be brought home. For example, Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) was established by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to utilise the skills and other resources of Africans in the diaspora for development in Africa (IOM, 2011b). It has been implemented in the Great Lakes region, Ethiopia, Ghana and Somalia, resulting in skill and resource transfers to various institutions, including universities and hospitals.

The Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol

To date, the CTRP has been recognised by UNESCO, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organization of American States (OAS), the African Union (AU) and Commonwealth Heads of Government as an example of international good practice in managing migration and development[3]. It outlines the rights and responsibilities of the various stakeholders: recruiting countries, source countries and recruited teachers. The document also speaks to the role of recruiting agencies as well as the monitoring, evaluation and future actions required of member countries and of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The CTRP does not specifically address the issues surrounding teachers who are forced to migrate. Yet, the principles it contains arguably apply to a variety of circumstances – such as recruitment, voluntary migration and forced migration – that affect Commonwealth teachers, including those who work in non-Commonwealth countries. It is notable that participants at the Sixth Commonwealth Research Symposium on Teacher Mobility, Recruitment and Migration convened in June 2011 in Ethiopia, felt that the principles of the CTRP could contribute towards setting in place policy frameworks for teacher migration, both voluntary and forced, including emergencies situations; making management of forced migrants more responsive and effective; and providing greater international consistency in the ways that all migrant teachers are managed in AU member states.

In 2008, the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned a review of the implementation of the CTRP (Ochs and Jackson, 2009). Key findings were:

- Context is central to the implementation of the Protocol, with macro issues determining migration flows as well as demand and influencing teachers' individual choices to migrate.

- Implementation of the Protocol extended well beyond the work of the stakeholders mentioned within the document itself. Rather, a much wider group of stakeholders – including schools, consultants, academe, ministries of labour and immigration, and qualification agencies – are part of what has been called a system of teacher migration (Ochs, 2011a) and are crucial to the wider implementation and awareness-raising activities for teachers whose rights are to be protected.

- Ministries of education are not capturing data on teacher movement. The migration routes reported by teachers themselves were distinctly different from those reported by ministries, which reflect more organised recruitment. With respect to education policy, it is important to distinguish

between teacher supply (the absolute number of teachers) and teacher deployment (the location where the teachers are working). Although a country might have achieved its target teacher supply numbers, the teachers must also be deployed where they are needed, which includes remote or unattractive areas.

- Individual teachers are choosing to work in a variety of different countries, and serial migration is not uncommon. Non-Commonwealth countries – including Japan, Korea and the United States as well as Middle Eastern states such as Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia – are recruiting Commonwealth teachers. Commonwealth countries are also recruiting teachers from non-Commonwealth countries such as China and Cuba. Recruitment initiatives can come from recruitment agencies, individual schools, local education authorities (school districts) or education ministries.

- The majority of teachers in the CTRP implementation review (Ochs and Jackson, 2009) were unaware of the Protocol. Whilst there have been substantial awareness raising and advocacy initiatives carried out by the Commonwealth Secretariat itself, and in partnership with civil society organisations, evidence suggests a strong need to increase advocacy and the engagement of teachers to raise awareness of their rights and available complaint mechanisms.

Challenges to implementation

Gathering data on the implementation of the CTRP has been difficult (Ochs and Jackson, 2009). Even where reliable mechanisms for gathering data on teacher stock and flow exist, they rarely capture the nationality of teachers or whether the reason a teacher has left the teaching service is to work abroad. Although student mobility is well recorded, there is no international database that keeps track of teacher mobility. Improvements to education information management systems would assist teacher supply and demand planning.

There is also a lack of qualifications frameworks that are transnational and facilitate comparisons. As Jonathan Jansen put it, 'a teacher from Jamaica, Seychelles or South Africa who goes to the UK will always be suspected of not being good enough'. He added that there are two sides to this issue, 'on the one hand, real problems of inequality, under-resourcing and poor qualifications; and on the other, imperialism and racism' (Jansen in Ochs, 2011b, p. 12). Moving towards harmonisation of standards would assist the migration process for both voluntary and forced migrants, and 80 countries are involved in transnational qualifications frameworks (Keevy, 2010). The Commonwealth Secretariat, in co-operation with the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA), has developed useful tools on the recognition of teacher qualifications and professional registration status across Commonwealth countries (Morrow and Keevy, 2006; Keevy and Jansen, 2010). While difficulties inevitably arise in comparing qualifications in a meaningful and fair way, and in developing and maintaining regular comparisons (Gravelle, 2011), there is high value in qualification comparability frameworks as tools for managing formal recruitment, teacher mobility and voluntary migration (Ochs and Jackson, 2009).

Work on the implementation of the CTRP has shown that, because recruitment agencies are existentially and financially dependent on maximising their profits, they may sometimes behave less than ethically, having insufficient regard for the effect of recruiting teachers on either the source country or the rights of the teachers (Ochs, 2011a). Problems teachers then face might include inadequate or non-existent contracts; finding on arrival that their job has significantly less status or remuneration than that promised, poor accommodation, discrimination or job insecurity (Reid, 2006). Moreover, the impact of the global financial crisis on international exchange rates and the devaluation of currencies in developing market economies have led to some teachers reportedly getting 'stuck' working abroad, unable to return home despite negative changes in their life circumstances.

To protect the rights of teachers, teachers' organisations play a critical role. The ILO and UNESCO recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) states that 'both salaries and working conditions for teachers should be determined through a process of negotiation between teachers' organizations and the employer of teachers' (ILO and UNESCO, 2008, p. 34). To this end, internationally recruited teachers should have access to information on teachers' organisations and unions in destination countries and teachers' organisations should actively extend their service to migrant teachers by requesting information of recruiters and appropriately informing and advising them about teachers' rights. A rights-based approach further seeks to enhance levels of accountability and the capacities of duty bearers to meet their obligations.

Implementation successes in Africa

The review of the CTRP (Ochs and Jackson, 2009) found several examples of implementation successes, including actions taken by the governments of Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles and Swaziland. In Kenya, the application of the Protocol is monitored through periodic meetings with the Teachers Service Commission, which handles all requests for the organised recruitment of teachers. The survey response also revealed that 'details of the complaint mechanisms and procedures are spelled out on the contract documents between the teachers and recruiting country' (ibid., p. 16). In Mauritius, the CTRP has been publicised by the press and a registry of expatriate teachers is maintained by the Ministry of Education (ibid., p. 19). Seychelles reported that it used the Protocol to 'identify what it needs to do to find ways to retain its teachers. The Ministry [of Education] examines the ongoing in-service professional development options for teachers, and what kind of accreditations with universities they should be given to achieve higher qualifications' (ibid., p. 24). In Swaziland, the Ministry reported that it had 'upgraded its policies to be in line with the requirements of the Protocol – i.e. (a) amended the Teaching Service Act of 1982; and (b) developed a new act for the registration of teachers called 'the Council of Educators Act' (ibid., p. 28).

The AU has further acknowledged that the CTRP could provide useful insights for establishing a continental framework. Africa faces challenges from different forms of migration, trafficking, brain drain and HIV and AIDS. '… [I]n order to maximize the skills of African professionals, and promote viable socio-economic development at national and regional level, it is imperative that States adopt a proactive approach by replacing barriers toward migration with measures that effectively manage the movement of migrant labour between Sovereign State borders… (African Union, 2006, p. 9).

Conclusion

Participants at the Sixth Commonwealth Research Symposium developed a series of recommendations that would apply to practices in host countries as well as to government-level policies and actions[4]. At the host country level, policy recommendations included mainstreaming migration issues into national policy and reducing barriers to integration into the (formal) labour market, which ultimately entails action by both policy makers and employers. Actions could also be taken to ensure reasonable security of employment for migrant teachers and sensitivity to gendered needs. With regard to migration policy, fast tracking the official recognition of professional qualifications/ability to teach was also recommended. This might involve the removal of bureaucratic hurdles to the integration and movement of migrant teachers. In host communities and the work environment, awareness-raising activities would increase sensitivity to migrants' needs. Such initiatives could be undertaken by employers, civil society organisations and teacher associations as well as by government at the national, regional or local level.

Regarding education policy, recommendations included providing professional development necessary for teachers to achieve the qualifications required to teach in the formal system and creating pathways to achieve minimum standards in the host country. It was also recommended that a transitory mechanism be developed for teachers as yet unqualified under the host country system (or unable to demonstrate their qualification) as an interim measure, before qualification status is given, to enable teachers to teach. This might involve a competency-based rapid assessment of a teacher's ability in the classroom. An integrated migrant management policy between different authorities/agencies would encourage the rapid registration of teachers. Guidance on acceptable minimum remuneration for teachers could also be addressed, as could a promotion policy that does not discriminate against migrant teachers. Consideration of these issues could be included in proposals to donors and in donors' policies.

One of the lessons learned from the implementation of the CTRP is that very often the data on teachers are simply not available. Addressing the above issues will require considerable capacity-building of national systems monitoring teacher supply and demand, and stock and flow.

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Endnotes

1 This paper represents the opinions of the authors only, who accept all responsibility for errors and omissions. It is a revised Africa-focused version of a paper, 'Beyond the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol: Next steps in managing teacher migration in difficult circumstances' by Jonathan Penson, Akemi Yonemura, Barry Sesnan, Kimberly Ochs and Casmir Chanda. The original paper, which was presented at the 11th UKFIET Conference in Oxford, UK on 13 September 2011, was based on the contribution to the Sixth Commonwealth Research Symposium on Teacher Mobility, Recruitment and Migration, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 8–9 June 2011. This original article is also available at http://www.ineesite.org/post/academic_space/

2 The report defines a conflict-affected country as 'any country with 1,000 or more battle-related deaths over 1999–2008' and 'any country with more than 200 battle-related deaths in any one year between 2006 and 2008' (UNESCO, 2011, p. 138).

3 For further information, see the Commonwealth Secretariat website: http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/190663/ 190781/project_examples/

4 Information on the symposium is available at http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/190663/39504/2340 72/6commonwealth_research_symposia_on_teachermobility/ and http://www.eng.unesco-iicba.org/node/33. The symposium statement is available at http://www.eng.unesco-iicba.org/sites/default/files/6th%20ComSec%20teacher%20sym posium%20statement%20June%209%202011.pdf

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