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The new 'diaspora trap' framework: Explaining return migration from South Africa to Zimbabwe beyond the 'failure-success' framework

Divane Nzima [±]
Philani Moyo [¥]

Abstract

This article explores how South Africa-based Zimbabwean skilled migrants are dissuaded from returning home permanently. The study was conceptualised against the background that return migration has often been explained based on migrant failure or success in the host country. This failure-success dichotomy stems from the neo-classical economics theory of migration, the new economics of labour migration and the structuralist approach to return migration. Using a qualitative approach, this article challenges the failure-success theoretical position through an exploration of socio-economic factors in Zimbabwe and South Africa that deter permanent return migration. The article contributes to return migration theorising by introducing a new 'diaspora trap' framework which argues that permanent settlement is not always voluntary. Central to this involuntary permanent settlement is the social construction of migrants as successful in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean skilled migrants are thus entrapped in South Africa because of failure to live up to the 'success social construct,' and their inability to mitigate adversities in the host country.

Keywords: Return migration; NELM; neo-classical economics; structural approach; diaspora trap.

Introduction

Research that focuses on the dynamics of return migration among the diaspora in general, and the Zimbabwean cohort, in particular, is limited. According to Dillon (2013), a contradiction exists between the emphasis placed on remittances as a livelihood strategy and policies promoting return migration. The argument is contradictory considering that 'return' has an opportunity cost in the form of lost income (remittances) (Dillon 2013; Nzima, Duma & Moyo 2016a). Few studies on return migration in Africa have focused on the situation of returnees with special emphasis on how they integrate into the country of origin and their contribution to development (Dziva and Kusena 2013; Guarneri 2014; Calenda 2014; Cassarino 2014; Batista, McIndoe-Calder, & Vicente, 2014). The challenges to return migration have not received much attention as the focus is directed to the diaspora contribution to development. Very little is known about what dissuades people from permanent return migration and the latent socio-economic factors that influence their decisions to return or not to return. The role of latent socio-

± Divane Nzima, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, University of Fort Hare, Private Bag X1314, Alice, 5700, South Africa. E-mail: dnzima@gmail.com.

¥ Philani Moyo, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, University of Fort Hare, Private Bag X1314, Alice, 5700, South Africa. E-mail: pmoyo@ufh.ac.za.

economic factors in influencing migrants' decision to return was central to this investigation. In this article, we extend the explanation of return migration and the absence thereof beyond the failure-success framework by introducing the 'diaspora trap' framework. This framework focuses on social and economic factors that deter return migration in both the origin and the host countries.

The study was based on in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with 80 skilled Zimbabwean migrants and 10 key informants. The sample was largely respondent-driven owing to the difficulties in establishing a comprehensive sampling frame. Interviews were conducted in two of South Africa's main economic hubs, namely, Gauteng Province and Western Cape Province. All skilled migrants in the sample had spent not less than five years in South Africa and left Zimbabwe already in possession of their first tertiary qualification. Data was coded in Atlas-ti and thereafter analysed by thematic content analysis.

Defining the Zimbabwean Diaspora

In the present day, the definition of the term 'diaspora' is highly contested. Migration scholars acknowledge that the term 'diaspora' has seized to be a preserve for conceptualising Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion (Butler 2001; Pasura 2010; McGregor 2010). According to Butler (2001: 189) in the most basic sense, the term 'diaspora' is defined as the "dispersal of a people from its original homeland." Pasura (2010) finds that many scholars associate diaspora with forced migration while others associate it with people who share similar ethno-national origins and are scattered in several host countries. Given the contestations surrounding defining 'diaspora' McGregor (2010) suggests a route that tries to understand how Zimbabweans themselves have taken up the idea of diaspora. McGregor argues that *'madiaspora'or amadiaspora* in Shona and Ndebele respectively, have been used as self identification and ascribed labels. These labels have had a heavy presence in Zimbabwean popular discourse since the year 2000. In the case of Zimbabwe term diaspora is used to refer to places of settlement outside Zimbabwe, as well as the people who have engaged in outward migration. As a result McGregor (2010) notes that in popular Zimbabwean discourse, 'diaspora' is often treated as a noun as opposed to an adjective. Therefore, emigrating from Zimbabwe is now synonymous to going to the Diaspora and assuming a Diaspora identity. Furthermore, emigrating from Zimbabwe or going to the Diaspora has been very popular since the beginning of Zimbabwe's economic downturn in the year 2000. 'Diasporans' and their families in Zimbabwe have been associated with socio-economic success. This has in turn motivated millions to join the Zimbabwean exodus to the 'Diaspora' in the hope of escaping social, political and economic hardships. It is in the above context and the Zimbabwean migration situation contextualised below that the term 'diaspora' has been used in this study.

Contextualising migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa

Historically, South Africa has been the biggest recipient of migrant labour in Southern Africa. Through its agencies such as WNLA[1], the South African chamber of mines had a migrant labour catchment area that covered several countries within the region, with the major suppliers being, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho and the former Transkei homeland (Leys 1975; Lucas 1987; Zinyama 1990; Kanyeze 2004). Although the present day Zimbabwe fell within the recruitment catchment areas of the Witwatersrand gold mines, labour from Zimbabwe was formally sourced in 1974 after the severe labour shortages in the gold mines (Leys 1975). Prior to 1974, employers had a legal obligation to ensure their migrant workers returned home. This was done by deliberately employing them on short term contracts (Leys 1975; Lucas 1987). However, in response to the 1974 labour crisis, the South African government scrapped this provision, and thus return migration became a voluntary act (Leys 1975; Lucas 1987). The subsequent long-term contracts led to the era where permanent settlement in South Africa became more pronounced and thus hostilities between citizens and foreigners began to emerge.

South Africa has continued to receive migrants from all over Africa including post-independent Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean migration to South Africa has risen over the past three decades. The most notable periods within this era being, the skills flight of white Zimbabweans, and the Gukurahundi[2] disturbances in the Southern parts of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s (Zinyama 1990). Again in the 1990s more skills were lost to South Africa owing to the devastating effects of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) (Kadenge et al 1992; Chakaodza 1998; Chapika 1998). Furthermore, South Africa was the recipient of unskilled and skilled migrants during the height of the Zimbabwean 2001-2008 economic crisis, sparked by the controversial land reform programme (Ncube and Gomez 2011; Mortensen 2014; Nzima 2013; Duri 2016). Since 1974 to date, there has been a strong culture of migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa. This culture of migration has been shaped by incidences of conflict, insecurity, and economic turmoil in the sending country as well as perceptions of economic opportunities in the receiving country (Cohen and Sirckeci 2011). However, this Zimbabwean culture of migration has been met with social and policy opposition in the post-1994 South Africa. This opposition was partly influenced by the pre-1974 migration policy that forced return migration from South Africa. In recent times Zimbabwean migrants and other African migrants in South Africa have been subjected to episodes of sporadic xenophobic violence (McKnight 2008; Duri 2016). Sirckeci, Cohen and Yazgan

[1] WNLA refers to the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association which was an agency of the South African Chamber of Mines and held exclusive rights to recruit labour from the Southern African region and established recruitment stations in a number of countries including present day Zimbabwe.

[2] Gukurahundi is a Shona term that means the whirlwind that removes the chuff in the fields. The period referred to as Gukurahundi in the early 1980s was marked by state orchestrated political violence against the people in the Southern parts of Zimbabwe. There are claims that an estimated 20 000 people lost their lives.

(2012) found that ethnic discrimination and xenophobia against Turks in Germany led to growing return migration and outflows from Germany. On the contrary, similar circumstances experienced by Zimbabweans in South Africa have not yielded similar outcomes. In the face of economic adversities and xenophobic conflict in South Africa, Zimbabweans have remained resilient and defied return migration. This has resuscitated debates on return migration and partly inspired us to explore the factors deterring return migration notwithstanding the volatile and inhospitable host environment.

The failure-success conception of return migration

There is a general consensus amongst scholars within the discourse of migration that existing theories in migration are not sufficient in explaining contentious issues within the discourse (Cassarino, 2004; de Haas, Fokkema, & Fihri, 2015; Nzima, Duma, & Moyo 2016b). Issues like why some migrants return while others do not return or just what triggers the process of return migration are not dealt with sufficiently in existing migration theories. Leading migration theories are grossly conflicted in their explanation of return migration in particular (Cassarino, 2004; Constant & Massey, 2002). Return migration has often been explained based on the failure-success framework. According to this framework, return migration can only occur after a failed or a successful migration experience (Cassarino, 2004; de Haas et al., 2015; Gibson & McKenzie, 2011; Makina, 2012; Nukaga, 2013). The key heuristic in the failure-success framework lies in the extent to which migrants are integrated in the host country (Cassarino, 2004; Constant & Massey, 2002). Failure to integrate leads to a return of failure while being successfully integrated leads to a permanent settlement or the achievement of goals and thus return migration occurs.

The neo-classical economics theory of migration (NE) as espoused by Todaro (1969) implies that return migration can only be a by-product of a failed migration experience. NE only uses economic or financial reasons to determine whether a migrant is integrated or not. For example, migrants who have failed to secure employment are considered as less integrated and they are regarded as failures hence they return(Cassarino, 2004; de Haas et al., 2015). On the contrary, many studies have revealed that there are migrants who fall victim to unemployment in host countries and they are involved in precarious work and precarious lifestyles (Bloch, 2008; Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Mortensen, 2014; Smit & Rugunanan, 2014). Arguing from a neoclassical economics perspective, migrants in such situations should have returned home. However, the reality of the matter is that many do not return. According to this approach, failure is the only reason for return. NE does not explain why in some cases return does not occur in spite of visible failure as is defined by this theory. There are possibilities that migrants find social mechanisms that keep them going amid difficult situations such as xenophobia and exploitative survival employment. In addition, while this theory only looks at the environment in the host country, Cassarino (2004) has rightfully noted that the home country

environment has not been given any attention. For example, there is no mention of how these migrants relate and stay connected to their families in origin countries. NE looks at migrants independently from their families and by default their social responsibilities in the origin country. As a result, the theory has no room for other return motives other than economic failure. Lastly, this theory is insufficient because it only sees return as an anomaly. Hence it does not attempt to explain why some migrants do not return because ideally, NE views migration as a one-way process with no room for return (Cassarino, 2004; Makina, 2012).

Contrary to the neo-classical economics theory of migration, the new economics for labour migration (NELM) analyses migration from a household level. As espoused by Oded stark, migration is a livelihood strategy that is employed at the level of the family (Cassarino, 2004; De Haas, 2010; Massey et al., 2013; Taylor, 1999). The individual chosen to migrate collectively sets specific goals with the household prior to migrating. The decision to migrate, the objectives to be met and the decision to return are all mutually interdependent. According to Cassarino, (2004) when using NELM as a framework of analysis, return migration is a rational outcome of a well-calculated strategy. Changing the livelihood situation at home is the primary reason for migrating. As a result, migrants will only return home after successfully earning high incomes and accumulating enough savings. In addition, prior to returning, migrants should have been able to remit enough in order to meet their investment goals in the home country (de Haas et al., 2015). Given the above, NELM postulates that return migration is a natural constituent of the migration process (Makina, 2012). However, NELM only provides an explanation for the return of success as it assumes that return can only be logical once migration targets have been met (Cassarino, 2004; de Haas et al., 2015). This line of argument is problematic because only economic factors are considered in arriving at this conclusion. The success that leads to return is purely economic as evidenced by the goals of income maximisation and savings accumulation.

The structural approach to return migration provides an alternative explanation. This approach takes into account contextual, situational and institutional factors in explaining return migration (Cassarino, 2004; Dako-Gyeke, 2015; Makina, 2012). The structural approach to return migration as synthesised by Cassarino (2004) borrows heavily from the return migration typologies as expounded by Cerase (1974). Although these typologies also provide room to take into account contextual situations in home countries to analyse return migration, they still do not fully capture the complexities involved in return migration decision making. Essentially, the structural approach and in particular Cerase's typologies are based on actual returnees who were self-reporting on why they returned. There is no reference to reasons why current migrants do not return. For example, in return of failure, the same argument as that made by the neo-classical economics theory of migration is made. While this argument holds to some extent, in reality, there are millions of migrants who are not returning and those who have no intentions to return despite the failure to integrate. Consequently, NELM argues that failure to

integrate leads to postponement of return which later leads to permanent settlement. Similarly, the two typologies namely; return of conservatism and return of innovation can be categorised under the return of success as argued by NELM. The two entail a carefully planned migration experience where migration objectives have been achieved and thus migrants return. Given the foregoing, the structural approach extends the failure-success dichotomy. However, despite co-opting failure and success, the structural approach is central in identifying explanations of return and non-return migration as it is premised on the understanding that migrant experiences differ and therefore circumstances leading to return migration differ as well.

Contradictions in the failure-success framework

The fact that the explanation of return migration was curved into existing migration theories is a challenge that is arguably easy to notice. However, one of the major problematic areas of return migration theorising using the failure-success framework lies in its key heuristic namely, the extent of integration[3]. There is an assumption that people who are loosely integrated to the host country are less likely to have a successful migration experience compared to those who are strongly integrated. If one attempts to use the failure-success analytical framework in explaining why migrants do not return, the following would be the possible explanations:

> Migrants do not return because they have been successfully integrated in the host country (NE/Failure).
>
> Migrants do not return because they are not successfully integrated in the host country hence they are not in a position to meet their migration objectives to warrant returning (NELM/Success).

These two theories contradict one another. Studies have shown that migrants are often excluded from economic participation in host countries for various reasons such as lack of legal status, prejudice and stiff competition for jobs (Bloch, 2008; Kurekova, 2011; Smit & Rugunanan, 2014; Tevera, 2014). In such cases, where migrants face untold suffering in host countries due to integration failure it is logical that return should be their resolve. However, given that migration is used as a livelihood strategy to self-ensure against livelihood risks in the home country, return prior to meeting goals would be irrational. Repeated postponement of

[3] The term integration refers to the extent to which a migrant has adapted to the host country. A migrant who has adapted and settled well is expected to have a means of earning income such as a business or gainful employment. In classical economic terms the individual who is well integrated would have been able to achieve income maximisation. On the contrary a loosely integrated person would most likely be involved in survival employment and not having proper documentation such as a passport and work permit. Classical economic definitions have often ignored the social aspects of integration. These include the extent to which an individual forms new relations in the host country i.e. networks of friends and marriage. In addition, this could include the extent to which an individual adapts and learns new languages and cultures.

return in the face of suffering and persecution abroad cannot find an explanation in the failure-success framework. Evidence from Canada, Britain and South Africa has shown that migrants undergo untold suffering, they work long hours for low wages under precarious conditions (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; McGregor, 2007; Smit & Rugunanan, 2014). Overall, given the foregoing contradictions, the lack of adequacy in migration theorising (King 2012; Massey et al. 2013), particularly with regards to return migration deterrents, begs the need for new theorising.

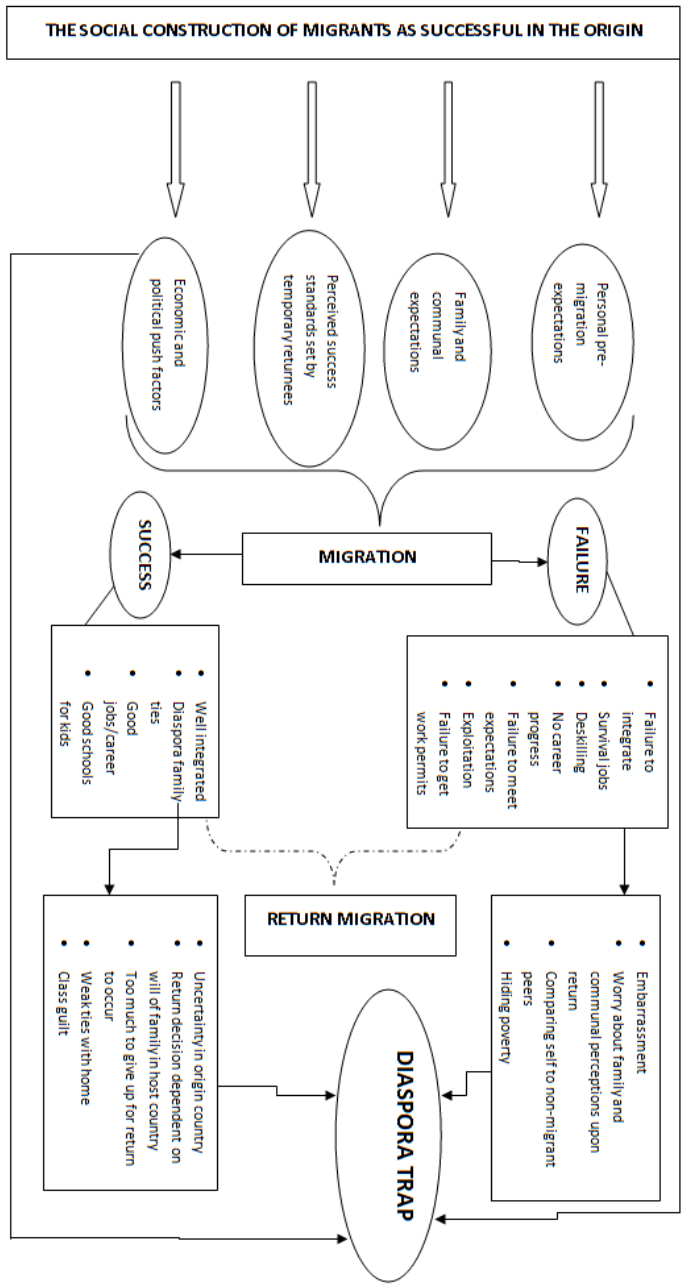
The 'new Diaspora trap' framework

In response to the theoretical gaps in return migration theorising, this paper contributes to the return migration debate through a rereading and reinterpretation of the two main theoretical paradigms that attempt to explain return migration (or lack-of). The success-failure dichotomy expounded through the New Economics of Labour Migration and the Neo-Classical Economic theory of migration are the epicenter of this theoretical engagement and contestation. A structural approach, which takes into account contextual and institutional factors in explaining return migration, partly forms the basis of critiquing the two theories under examination. This lays the foundation for the introduction of a 'new diaspora trap framework' which is a more critical variation of the broader structural approach that considers differing contexts in explaining return migration or lack of it. This framework explains return migration beyond failure and success. In addition, through the 'new diaspora trap,' we show that permanent settlement is not always voluntary. There are socio-economic and political factors that coerce migrants into unplanned permanent settlement. The diagram below depicts the 'diaspora trap' framework. It shows the conditions that influence migration and the conditions under which return migration should have taken place from a failure-success perspective. In addition, the framework shows the adversities that migrants failed to negotiate leading to their involuntary permanent settlement in South Africa. Using this diagram we explain and illustrate how the 'diaspora trap' manifests among South Africa-based Zimbabwean skilled migrants.

The success social construct

Many in Zimbabwean society have constructed a very positive narrative with regards to migration and the prospects of fortune. Owing to this commonly held view, people build positive expectations of the conditions in countries of settlement prior to migration (Mlambo, 2010; Maphosa, 2010; Tevera & Crush, 2010). This 'success social construct' dates back to the 20th century when upon return, men who had migrated to work in the South African mines had achieved economic success and thus were held in high esteem in society (Mlambo, 2010). Owing to this 'success social construct', this study found that in the face of livelihood challenges in Zimbabwe, migration becomes a livelihood strategy of choice for many households. In some instances, migration has occurred solely for the purposes of prestige, wherein people migrated in order to come back success-

Figure 1. The 'new Diaspora Trap' Framework



Source: (Field data 2015/16)

ful and enjoy being revered by their peers in their communities (Maphosa, 2010; Nzima, 2013). Owing to this 'social construction of migrants as successful', this study has found that a lot of migration decisions are not well thought-out. The 'success social construct' is behind the high expectations held by many Zimbabweans with regards to migration outcomes. These pre-migration expectations are often shared by the individual considering migration, their families, and their communities. There are varied events that have shaped and reinforced these expectations of success. For example at the height of the 2008 economic crisis in Zimbabwe, families were sustained by the resilient way in which migrants remitted (Bloch, 2008; McGregor, 2014; Mortensen, 2014). In addition to the foregoing, expectations of success are further reinforced by temporary returnees who often come back during holidays portraying an image of success. Maphosa (2010) and Nzima (2013) found that temporary returnees tell stories of their good life in South Africa and they show off their fancy material possessions such as clothes and cars. These temporary returnees' images confirm the perceived 'success social construct' and influences would be migrants to join the exodus. Faced with social, economic and political challenges in Zimbabwe, people genuinely believe that going to South Africa is the answer to their problems. As a result, they hastily take the decision to migrate to South Africa without acquiring sufficient information about the conditions in the host country. This is similar to what Nowicka (2012) found in Poland wherein migrants often migrate with insufficient information as they put too much trust in their expectations. Also, Dako-Gyeke (2015) found that pre-migration plans among the youth in Ghana were based on unverified information sources and most of them associated migration with success. This 'success social construct' is detrimental for return migration. It constitutes the 'bedrock' towards what this study call the 'diaspora trap'. This 'diaspora trap' results from the failure to meet expectations of success post-migration. This failure is born out of the inability to mitigate adversities in the host country.

Post migration reality

This study found that post-migration reality leads to shifting expectations. What this means is that when migrants arrive in the host country they experience socio-economic and political reality. The pre-migration expectations once commonly shared with their families and communities begin to be seen as unrealistic. However, the family and community back home still subscribe to those expectations. Given that most migrants were financially assisted by family and social networks during the migration process (De Haas 2010; Moternsen 2014) they are thus pressurised to meet their expectations at all costs. Their families and communities expect them to be local agents of development. They expect them to return wealthy and in possession of assets such as cars, livestock, and houses amongst others. Most of the migrants in this study were frustrated by these expectations and they felt that returning without meeting them was not an option. Zimbabwean skilled migrants in South Africa were not comfortable about returning

to Zimbabwe without meeting family and communal expectations of success. Given the foregoing, one can argue that the failure to fit into the 'success social construct' resulted in the indefinite postponement of return migration. Eventually, permanent settlement in South Africa occurs.

Failure and the 'Diaspora Trap'

The failure to meet expectations of success poses a number of challenges for return migration. According to the neo-classical economics theory of migration (NE) failure in migration experience is supposed to lead to return migration (Kurekova 2011; Makina 2012; de Haas et al 2015). The NE theory argues that this occurs because of a miscalculation of migration costs (Cassarino 2004). Failure amongst Zimbabwean skilled migrants in South Africa manifests in poor economic integration, underemployment, poor incomes, and deskilling. They face various constraints such as not having a work permit and stiff competition for jobs from locals. In South Africa first preference for jobs is given to citizens who are protected by policies such as affirmative action (Nzima & Duma 2014).The failure to secure gainful employment further put a dent in migrants' career progression and resulted in deskilling.

Other scholars also concur that the reality in the diaspora is harsh as there are scores of incidences of deskilling and high unemployment witnessed amongst skilled migrants (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Man, 2004; Nowicka, 2012; Siar, 2013). Skilled people who used to occupy high skill positions find themselves demoted to precarious and survival employment.

The ultimate outcome of survival employment is low incomes earned. Following the tenets of the neo-classical economics theory of migration, this would imply that migrants ought to return home as migration has failed to yield the desired result (Cassarino 2004; Makina 2012). However, Zimbabwean skilled migrants rationalised against returning. Instead, they postponed their stay in South Africa indefinitely. Using their small incomes, migrants continued to maintain expensive transnational lives. They finance their stay in South Africa and also remit some of their incomes to support their families in Zimbabwe. This also means that there are limited prospects for investment and savings and skilled migrants survive from hand to mouth. This implies that migrants are thus not able to properly plan for return migration. As a result, migrants continue to lead temporary lifestyles in South Africa with no immediate prospects for returning to Zimbabwe. Given the expectations of migrant success in Zimbabwe, returning poor contradicts the 'success social construct'. Though skilled migrants find themselves in difficult socio-economic situations in South Africa they are too embarrassed to accept their circumstances and return to Zimbabwe. Migrants feel secure maintaining a positive image to their families and their communities whom they do not want to be aware of their indigence.

What makes the return decision even more difficult is the fact that migrants compare their situations with non-migrant peers back home. Despite the harsh economic condition in Zimbabwe, some skilled people who remained have managed to achieve milestones such as buying houses, pieces of land, cars and getting married. Having failed to achieve the same while in a better South African economic environment, migrants feel a lot of pressure to meet the migrant success expectations. Consequently, they continuously postpone their return hoping that things will get better; but regrettably, they never do and migrants are forced into a permanent settlement.

Success and the 'Diaspora Trap'

This study also found that success does not guarantee return migration. From an NELM perspective, return migration is a rational outcome of a well-calculated strategy. This implies that migrants and their household were able to achieve their migration objectives. According to the proponents of NELM, it is logical for migrants to return home upon their achievement of the migration goals or targets that were set prior to migration (Cassarino 2004; Syed 2008; Bimrose & McNair 2011; Makina 2012; de Haas et al 2015). On the contrary, South Africa-based Zimbabwean skilled migrants who had achieved some measure of success were ambivalent about return despite clearly articulating their return migration intentions. The absence of return migration was attributed to various socio-economic factors.

This is partly because many Zimbabwean skilled migrants who have had a successful migration experience in South Africa are now well integrated socially and economically. Some of them have been in South Africa for as long as twenty years. Strong economic integration was also attributed to a carefully planned migration process whereby migrants were able to acquire relevant immigration documents to secure gainful employment upon arrival in South Africa. In addition, strong social integration was derived from inter-marriages whereby migrants have married and sired children with South African spouses. This has resulted in the emergence of transnational families. Such families are a common feature of migration and have been cited as being a complication to return migration decision making (Nguyen-Akbar 2014; Carling & Erdal 2014). The classical failure-success dichotomy bases its explanation of return migration on the extent of economic integration and ignores social integration. This causes complications in explaining the absence of return migration when migrants have achieved income maximisation and ought to have returned as migration objectives would have been achieved. Though return migration would be desired, social integration brings forth strong diaspora family ties which in turn weakens ties with the home country. Seen from a 'diaspora trap' framework which looks at integration holistically, the absence of return despite the presence of return intentions can be explained through a social lens as well.

Despite having been successful in their migration experiences, some migrants do not return because of social class differences with their non-migrant kinsmen. This is another social dynamic that the failure-success dichotomy has failed to take into account in conceptualising return migration explanations. Previous studies have shown that tensions of return are likely to ensue following the class differences that exist between family members from the host country and those from the origin country (Nguyen-Akbar 2014). This is another case where the migrant 'success social construct' causes problems for return migration. When migrants have actually achieved the success and also developed strong diaspora family ties, sharing their success with those in the origin country becomes complicated. The fact that they cannot extend these privileges to the rest of the family means that to continue enjoying them they have to remain in South Africa. From a 'diaspora trap' perspective, one can argue that the inability to transfer the success and social prestige to the remaining kinsmen forces migrants into a permanent settlement.

Even with migration objectives achieved, return migration can still be constrained by the unfavourable conditions in the home country. In explaining return migration, theories of migration have fallen short in examining the conditions in the environment to which migrants ought to return to (Constant & Massey 2002; Dustmann 2003; Makina 2012). Given the strong diaspora family ties, the decision to return has to be taken collectively with spouses and children who have never lived in Zimbabwe. In light of the volatile socio-economic conditions in Zimbabwe, South African spouses were sceptical of the life in Zimbabwe and feared that their lifestyles will be disrupted if they moved to Zimbabwe. Therefore, despite the willingness to return, for successful migrants, return could only be possible if the home environment was stable and would allow very minimal lifestyle changes. Even though some migrants could forego some of their social status privileges, they felt that making that decision was going to be unfair to their spouses and children who would be required to give up a lot on their account. Using the 'diaspora trap' framework, the absence of return despite success could also be explained by the conditions in the home environment and return migration being a collective decision in cases where there are strong diaspora family ties.

Conclusion

One of the new knowledge contributions of this study is its introduction of the 'diaspora trap' framework. The 'diaspora trap' framework presents an alternative to explaining return migration or the absence thereof beyond the success and failure framework. Zimbabwean skilled migrants often did not return despite failure or success as predicted by the NELM and NE theory of migration. These migrants were entrapped in South Africa by social, economic and political factors that were beyond their control. Despite these harsh experiences migrants rationalised against return migration. They resented returning to Zimbabwe without meeting family and communal expectations of success. The 'success social

construct' with regards to migration was found to be detrimental for return migration.

In addition, migration theories have ignored conditions in the origin country in coining return migration explanations. However, unfavourable socio-economic and political conditions in Zimbabwe have been found to be contributing in forcing migrants into a permanent settlement in South Africa. Return migration was constrained by the fact that skilled migrants did not envisage any viable livelihood strategies should they return. Therefore, with success or failure in their migration experiences, permanent return did not occur. In the same vein, theories of migration ignore social factors in explaining return migration. Social factors such as strong diaspora family ties have been found to weaken ties with the home country. In addition, in the event of economic success accompanied by weak ties with Zimbabwe, migrants have been found to be experiencing guilt from social class difference with their remaining kinsmen. These social factors have been found to be influencing the absence of return migration.

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