Changing the Culture of Migration? Attitudes towards Education among Former Basotho Labour Migrants to South African Mines

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Abstract

Until late in the 1990s, employment for unskilled and uneducated able-bodied Basotho men on South African mines was usually available. As a result, the education of male children in most Basotho households was not prioritised. In the 1990s, massive retrenchments took place at the mines, resulting in many Basotho men being retrenched and repatriated. Most of those retrenched did not have any formal education and were generally unskilled. Many of the ex-miners believed that they were retrenched to make way for an educated workforce. Back home, they experienced problems getting employment because of their lack of formal education. These experiences, combined with efforts by the government of Lesotho and its development partners to promote education, have led to a change in the attitudes of the former miners towards education. Most of them now have positive attitudes towards education as they perceive it as a more secure and more sustainable means of getting employment and a vehicle for economic and social mobility. Based on qualitative data obtained from former mine workers this paper provides evidence that as a result of new realities, former migrants are developing positive attitudes towards education. The change in attitude towards education can however, only evolve into a change in the culture of migration if, over time, the benefits of education outweigh those of migration.

Résumé

Jusqu'à la fin des années 1990, il y avait généralement de l'emploi pour les migrants basotho valides non qualifiés et non instruits. En conséquence, l'éducation des enfants de sexe masculin dans la plupart des ménages basotho n'était pas une priorité. Cependant, dans les années 1990, il y a eu des licenciements massifs dans les mines. Ces licenciements massifs ont touché beaucoup de travailleurs basotho et entraîné leur rapatriement. La plupart des licenciés étaient non instruits et généralement non qualifiés. Beaucoup de ces

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ex-mineurs croyaient avoir été licenciés pour faire place à une main-d'œuvre instruite. Mais de retour chez eux, ils ont eu du mal à trouver un emploi du fait qu'ils n'étaient pas instruits. Ces expériences, associées aux efforts déployés par le gouvernement du Lesotho et son partenaire au développement pour promouvoir l'éducation, ont conduit à un changement dans les attitudes des anciens mineurs en matière d'éducation. La plupart d'entre eux ont maintenant une attitude positive en matière d'éducation scolaire dans la mesure où ils perçoivent celle-ci comme un moyen plus sûr et plus durable d'obtenir un emploi et un véhicule pour la mobilité économique et sociale. Sur la base des données qualitatives recueillies auprès d'anciens mineurs, cette étude souligne qu'en raison des nouvelles réalités, les anciens migrants développent des attitudes positives en matière d'éducation scolaire. Toutefois, ce changement d'attitude en matière d'éducation scolaire doit s'accompagner d'un changement en matière de culture de migration si, au fil du temps, les avantages de l'éducation scolaire l'emportent sur ceux de la migration.

Introduction

When migration becomes an expectation and a normal part of life of a community, a culture of migration may evolve (Brettell and Holified 2000), so that migration becomes ingrained into the repertoire of behaviours and values of members of that community (Brettell 2003). Kandel and Massey (2002) assert that a culture of migration exists when migration becomes so deeply rooted that the prospect of transnational movement becomes normative. At that point members of a community see migration as a normal part of the life course, representing a marker of the transition to manhood in addition to being a widely accepted vehicle for economic mobility.

A culture of migration therefore usually develops as a response to a community's experience of the benefits of migration. Labour migration, especially, is not just an escape from poverty and unemployment, it is a route to upward social mobility for both the migrants and their families and a source of prestige (Maphosa 2011; Mangezvo, undated). As pointed out by Ali (2007) a culture of migration includes the ideas, practices and cultural artefacts that reinforce the celebration of migration and migrants.

As a result of the long history of migration from other countries in the region to South Africa, several writers have observed the existence of a culture of migration in migrant-sending countries. For example Schapera (1947) observed that in Botswana, a stint underground in South African mines had come to substitute for more traditional forms of initiation. Murray (1981) observed that in Lesotho almost all men and a few women spent most of their middle ages absent from their homes working in South Africa, especially in the mines. Maphosa (2004) found that in some parts of the Matabeleland region in Zimbabwe, migrating to South Africa marked the

coming of age of young men. In fact those who had not been to South Africa were considered as unsophisticated.

Most of the studies on the culture of migration in Southern Africa have concentrated on its impact on the communities of origin. Very few have focused on the realities that have led to or can lead to a change in the culture of migration. This paper seeks to make a contribution towards the filing of this gap.

Statement of the Problem

Due to a combination of historical, geographical and socio-cultural factors, the relationship between Lesotho and South Africa is unique. Lesotho is totally surrounded by South Africa. As an enclave economy and with limited resources, Lesotho is more dependent on South Africa than other countries in the region. As a result Basotho started migrating to South Africa as early as the nineteenth century to seek employment on farms and in towns in the Orange Free State and the Cape Colony. Others were engaged as individual wage labourers in diamond mines, railway works and towns (Kimble 1999).When gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand in 1886, there was an unprecedented rise in the demand for miners and many Basotho men responded to the growing demand that was created by the gold discoveries.

The demand for labour in South Africa came at a time when agricultural production, which was Lesotho's primary source of livelihood, was depreciating dramatically. During this period, Basotho cultivated land for subsistence and used surplus produce to trade with fellow Africans through the barter system. They had become leading suppliers of crops to their neighbouring countries such that they became known as 'the granary of Southern Africa' (Keegan 1986; Kimble 1992). However, adverse weather conditions such as severe droughts undermined agricultural production. The dry weather persisted, and simultaneously the soil quality depreciated and yields lowered significantly since the time Basotho had originally started cultivating (Edredge 1993). The severe drought was followed by the even the more devastating rinderpest, which also decreased agricultural output.

When agricultural produce and trading opportunities diminished because of unfavourable weather conditions, Basotho were forced to consider alternative strategies to meet their basic needs. Migration to South Africa to seek employment became one such option. Gradually, labour migration to South Africa became a necessary element in the economy of most Basotho households (Keegan 1986; Edredge 1993; Crush et al. 1991). Furthermore, engagement in the mines proved to be a favourable option because returns from the mines were far better than returns from agriculture.

The high demand for labour in the South African mines led to the introduction of strategies intended to compel Basotho men to migrate to the mines for employment. The strategies included the introduction of a hut tax, the use of mine recruiting agencies and the involvement of government bodies to manage this system. The government of Lesotho was eager to encourage its men to participate in labour migration. This was because it generated substantial amounts of revenue through charging the mining companies for every employee sent and the deferred payment system in which a large proportion of workers' wages were paid into a special account in the state-owned National Development Bank (Morojele 2004).

As a result of the long history of migration from Lesotho to South Africa, a culture of migration evolved among Basotho. However, in the 1990s among other factors falling profits led to a massive retrenchment of workers from South African mines. Many Basotho men were retrenched and repatriated. Most of them were uneducated and unskilled. On returning home, they found that the skills and knowledge they had acquired at the mines were not relevant. This study sought to investigate the impact of the retrenchments on the attitudes of former mine workers towards education.

Objectives of the Study

Main Objective
The main objective of the study was to find out if the retrenchments of Basotho from the South African mines had led to a change in their attitudes towards education.

Specific Objectives
The specific objectives of the study were:

- To investigate the attitudes of the former mine workers towards education before they were retrenched.
- To find out what the former mine workers attributed their retrenchment to and how consistent these attributions were with management's reasons for retrenchment.
- To investigate the attitudes of the mine workers towards education after their retrenchment.

Methodology

This paper is based on interviews with former mine workers in Lesotho. The study adopted a qualitative design focusing on the life histories of the former mine workers. Unstructured interviews were conducted with the

former mine workers to obtain information about why they had chosen to work in the mines, why they thought they had been retrenched and how this has affected their outlook in general. Data were collected from former mine workers who were met at the premises of three organisations, namely, the Department of Labour, the Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA), and ER Ramsden Bleskop. The first one is a government department responsible for employment while the other two organisations are mine recruiting agencies located in Maseru. TEBA recruits men who work at gold and platinum mines, while ER Ramsden Bleskop recruits workers for mainly platinum and coal mines and shaft sinkers for all mines. These organisations were located in Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho. Many of the former miners had relocated to Maseru after retrenchment with the hope of either getting employment in Lesotho or being re-hired as mine workers in South Africa. Due to the centralisation of recruitment services for these organisations, even those who had homes in the rural areas had to move to Maseru in the hope of obtaining employment. TEBA for example had reduced its functions in the other districts of Lesotho with recruiting activities being undertaken only at the Maseru office.

Availability sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique was used. This means that there was no systematic or structured method of selecting research respondents. This is because of the lack of a sampling frame from which respondents could be selected. The exact number and personal details of retrenched mineworkers were not known. Available statistics of labour migration from Lesotho to South Africa mainly referred to those who were still engaged in the mines. As a result these statistics were not useful for the purposes of this study whose focus was on those who had lost their jobs. It was not possible to develop any systematic list from which the respondents could be selected as there was no guarantee that those selected could be found when required. The respondents were therefore selected from those who were present at the time of collecting data and were willing to be interviewed. A total of twenty-six in-depth interviews were conducted with former miners of various ages who had worked for different mining companies, in different positions and for varying lengths of time.

Literature Review

A culture of migration exists when within a community migration has be-come so prevalent that it affects the values and perceptions of its members in a way that increases the probability for future migration (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Ali, Pellerino and Taylor 1993). Despite the existence of a substantial

amount of literature on the culture of migration, Ali (2007) observed that a clear definition or an outline of the contents of a culture of migration has not been advanced in the literature. Researchers, however, agree that a culture of migration has developed in a community when migration becomes deeply ingrained into the repertoire of the people's behaviours and values (Brettell 1993), when migration becomes so deeply rooted that the prospect of international movement becomes normative (Kandel and Massey 2002), when migration becomes an expectation and a normal part of the life course (Brettell and Holifield 2000), when migration becomes so ingrained in the culture that young men are not allowed to marry until they have gone abroad (IRIN 2011), or when migration becomes a habit (Timmerman 2008).

Several writers have observed the existence of a culture of migration among some Mexican communities which have high rates of migration to the USA (Kandel and Massey 2000; Gibson 2005). In such communities, young people expect to live and work in the United States at some point in their lives. The aspiration to migrate is actually transmitted across generations and through social networks. As observed by Ali (2007), the culture of migration has been a prominent theme in studies of Mexican migration to the US. It has not, however, been a common theme in studies of migration beyond this stream.

Some writers have observed cultures of migration in countries whose economies are dependent on South Africa (Schapera 1947; Boeder 1974; de Vletter 1981; Murray 1981; Hishongwa 1991; Weyl 1991; Hobane 1996; Maphosa 2004; Morojele 2004). For example Weyl (1991) observes that migration has become an integral part of such societies. As early as 1947, Schapera observed that in Botswana, after a stint underground had come to substitute more traditional forms of initiation. Murray (1981) observed that in Lesotho almost all men, and a few women, spend most of their middle ages absent from their homes. Maphosa (2004) found that in some parts of Matabeleland, migrating to South Africa marked the coming of age of young men. In fact those who had not been to South Africa were considered as unsophisticated. Despite the existence of a substantial volume of literature on the evolution of a culture of migration in Southern Africa, literature on the factors that may lead to a change in the cultures of migration is still scarce. This paper makes a contribution towards the filling of this gap in literature.

Definition of Concepts

The following are definitions adopted for the major concepts used in this paper:

- *Attitude*: An attitude is a predisposition or tendency to respond either positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person or situation, (http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/attitude.html). In this paper, the attitudes of the miners refer to their predispositions towards education which are likely to influence their choices regarding their own or their children's education.
- *Culture*: Culture generally refers to a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by human beings as members of society (Taylor 1871). Specifically, a culture of migration is made up of those ideas, practices and artefacts that reinforce the celebration of migration and migrants (Ali 2007).
- *Education*: Education refers to the process by which individuals formally or informally acquire knowledge and skills. In this paper, however, education is used in a limited sense to refer to the formalised processes of acquiring knowledge and skills. This refers to attending school or other formally arranged training activities.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of the findings of this study was informed by Daniel Katz's (1960) functional theory of attitude formation and change as well as Anthony Giddens's (1984) structuration theory. According to Katz, an individual forms, holds onto or changes an attitude because of the function that attitude performs for the individual. In Katz's scheme of things the trigger to change an attitude is either from within an individual or may be in the environment within which the individual exists. Structuration theory bridges the gap between explanations of human behaviour as a response to external factors (structure) and those that focus on individual choice (agency). It helps us avoid the implication of cultural determinism when referring to the 'culture of migration'. Cultural determinism is the view that culture determines human nature. It is a view of human beings as passive creatures who do whatever their culture tells them to do.

Human beings, however, do not passively respond to a 'reified entity called culture' (Ratner 2000). Culture is both a medium and an outcome of human conduct. Human beings are, at the same time, creators and products of culture. This means that culture, in this case the culture of migration, is subject to change as people try to adapt to changes in their environment.

Findings

Educational background of Migrants

The educational levels of Basotho mine migrant workers were generally very low with two respondents reporting that they had never attended any formal school. The rest had attended formal school but had not completed their primary education. This factor is attributable to the widespread practice amongst Basotho of discouraging male children from pursuing formal education or training (Morojele 2004). The general perception has been that even without formal education they would still be employable in the mines in South Africa (UNICEF 2001). Young Basotho men underent a traditional education (initiation) and upon completion were expected to migrate to South Africa for employment in the mines. Basotho culture expects men to provide for their families and success for them is measured by their capability to provide for their families (Thompson and Pleck 1987; Burn 1996; Mills and Ssewakiryanga 2005). Employment in South African mines gradually became one of the most important means to that end.

The 1997 Labour Force Survey provides evidence of the low educational levels of Basotho men. It indicates that there was an increase in the number of job-seekers who registered with the Lesotho Employment Office subsequent to large-scale mining retrenchments during 1993. It found that the majority of them had primary education while a significant number had no formal schooling at all. The respondents gave various reasons for their low levels of formal education, although all of them pointed to the low priority given to education, especially of men, among Basotho. One of the two respondents who had never attended formal school stated:

> At the time I was growing up, only a few parents understood the importance of education and encouraged their children to go to school. Most families, including mine, were eager to see their sons employed in the mines in South Africa. I was raised up knowing that I would be employed in the mines. I never attended any formal school.

The other stated:

> I have never been to school all my life. I grew up herding family livestock and therefore did not have a chance to go to school. When I became of age I migrated to South Africa to work in the mines. I worked have been working in the mines until I was retrenched.

Among the 24 who had attended school, only three had completed high school. The rest had dropped out before completing either primary or secondary schools. The reasons for dropping out of school at any stage were similar to those for not attending school at all.

As in the case of those who had never attended school at all, respondents who had dropped out of school gave various reasons for doing so although the reasons also pointed out to the low priority given to education compared to other personal or family considerations. Some indicated that they were forced out of school because of various family problems, which included failure to pay school fees. For example one of them stated:

> My family experienced severe economic problems and could not afford to pay for my schooling and I was forced to drop out of school. Considering the fact that I was the eldest son in my family, I felt obliged to assist my parents with looking after my sisters and brothers. I had to drop out school to look for employment in the mines.

Another respondent reported that he had to drop out of school when his father who had been the family's sole bread winner and the one responsible for his school fees died. He stated:

> I dropped out of school in standard three when my father died because I had to take care of my mother and younger brother.

Yet another stated that he dropped out because his brother who was his benefactor withdrew his support. He stated:

> My brother informed me that he could not afford to pay my fees anymore and advised me to look for employment.

Some of the respondents indicated that they had to drop out of school to look after their family livestock. This is evidence of the importance of livestock in Basotho household economies. This means that for such families livestock were a better form of investment even with regards to the inter-generational transfer of wealth. One of the respondents in this category stated:

> My father owned a lot of cattle and always made it clear that his sons would not attend formal school. He believed that it was a waste of time, especially for boys. To him, the way to secure our future was for us to help look after the family livestock.

There were respondents who dropped out of school because they had reached the stage where they were expected to start working and prepare to start their own families. One such respondent stated:

> In 1989 I obtained my Standard Seven certificate and enrolled for Form One, but soon dropped out and joined the traditional initiation programme. When I completed the programme I had come of age so I could not go back to school, so I decided to go to South Africa to look for employment in the mines.

Another one asserted:

> I dropped out of school at Standard Four. I had to drop out of school because I had
> come of age and had to start working.

According to Lesotho Laws, the age of majority is 18 years. The Lesotho
Labour Court Order of 1992 prohibits the employment of people under this
age. Turning 18 is therefore a very significant milestone in the lives of
Basotho youths because it makes them legally employable even outside the
country. Some of them so desperately desire to be employed that they alter
their stated age. To illustrate this point one respondent stated:

> Although I am actually 26 years old now my passport reflects that I am older than that.
> I was so desperate to go to the mines that I altered my age to appear older than I was.

The availability of large numbers of able bodied men without any formal education
or training worked in favour of the mine owners because they were assured of
cheap labour. Their operations depended on an unlimited supply of uneducated
and unskilled able bodied men who could be easily exploited (Crush et al. 1991).

Reasons for Working in the Mines
The main reason given by the respondents for their decisions to migrate to
South Africa to look for employment in the mines was a rational one: there
were limited employment opportunities in Lesotho. One of them stated:

> Working in the mines is nothing special. We go to work there because there are no
> jobs in our country. If we could be employed in this country there would be no need
> for us to go there.

While limited employment opportunities may be one of the push factors it is
certainly not the only or even the major push factor in labour migration from
Lesotho to South Africa. For example, some of the former miners had never
attempted to look for employment in Lesotho before leaving for South Africa.

Besides limited employment opportunities in Lesotho some respondents
stated that they opted to work in South Africa because South African employers
offered better wages than those in Lesotho. This comparison was based
mainly on information from those who had been to the mines. Where a
culture of migration has taken root, the decision to migrate is often not a
rational one. It is often influenced by often exaggerated accounts of work
abroad and the often extravagant lifestyles of migrants when they visit their
home communities as in the lifestyle of *injiva*, described by Maphosa (2011).

One respondent for example explained that before leaving for South Africa,
he had moved from one employer to another in Lesotho with the hope of
earning a better salary, but without success. He decided to leave for South
Africa because he perceived salaries in Lesotho to be very low compared to

those in the latter country, a perception based on accounts of those who had been to South Africa before. The mere perception that salaries were higher in South Africa than in Lesotho, without any specific knowledge of salary levels, is sufficient motivation for migration. Peer pressure therefore had a significant contribution to the decision to leave for many of the former migrants. One of the respondents pointed out:

> ... seeing my peers coming back from the mines looking smart, confident and rich impressed me. I told myself that one day I would look like them.

As pointed out by Ali (2007), a culture of migration involves the ideas, practices and artefacts that reinforce the celebration of migration and migrants. Brettell (2003) uses the term *vaidade* which means vanity, to describe the tendency by migrants to show off new found wealth from jewellery to cars and houses. *Vaidade* also involves the presentation of the self in public, including the migrants' manner of dressing, the cars they drive and the house they build. Maphosa (2011) found the tendency to show off prevalent among *injiva* (migrants) in the Matabeleland region of Zimbabwe. As a result, migrants become role models with all the symbols of success including money, cars, nice clothes and beautiful modern houses. This perception of a good life abroad has been found to constitute a pull factor in many areas that have a long history of out-migration.

Mine Retrenchments
Many factors contributed to the large-scale retrenchment of migrant labourers from the South African mines. Mine management, for instance, attributed the retrenchments to the influence of the former government's internalisation policy, and the uncertain and relatively low prices of minerals on the world markets. Thoahlane and Coplan (1995) argue that the increasing mechanisation, which attracted many companies because it saved them expenditure on increasing wages and benefits for the workers, also contributed significantly to the situation. However, the 1987 mineworkers' strike and unfavourable price of gold on the world markets were the most crucial factors that led to the retrenchments.

After the emergence of the National Union Mineworkers in 1983, mine management was pressured to improve working conditions of the miners, especially to increase wages. The NUM demanded a 55 percent wage increase, while mine management offered increases ranging from 17 to 23 on gold mines, and 15 to 23 percent on coal mines (Crush et al. 1991). Failure by the two parties to reach an agreement on this matter resulted in the 1987 strike. The mineworkers' strike continued for several weeks and caused substantial losses in mine production. Mine management tried various

strategies to break the strike but failed. Eventually they started dismissing workers and an estimated 60, 000 workers lost their jobs by the end of the strike (Markharm and Mothibeli 1987).

The price of gold on the international market in the years that followed the 1987 mineworkers' strike caused marked economic contractions in the South African economy (Bezuidenhout 1999). The gold price decreased from US $850 an ounce in 1980 to US $500 an ounce in 1987 and it lowered further by 1996 (Monyau 2000). To deal with the lowering gold prices, mine management decided to retrench workers and counteract operational losses (Siedman 1993). In some companies expired mineworkers contracts were not renewed while in others the response to the gold crisis was closing down of their operations. Gold mining industries lost nearly 180,000 jobs to downscaling and retrenchments as a result of mine closures (Seidman 1993). The drop in the gold price therefore had an immediate impact on the Lesotho economy because many Basotho men were retrenched because of the restructuring and downscaling of the South African mining industry (CBL 2001).

All informants indicated that management explained the reasons for retrenchment. The explanation, which seems to have been generally consistent across different mines, was that the price of gold had depreciated on the international market and operations had become unviable. Some companies informed their employees that they were retrenching because they had decided to use subcontracting companies.

Despite the explanations given by management for the retrenchments, some of the former workers had different explanations for why the retrenchments took place. The explanations given by the retrenchees included those that agreed with management that the retrenchments were caused by viability problems in the industry. Other reasons given by the former workers included the internalisation policy, xenophobia and lack of education. One respondent who believed that the companies were implementing a policy of replacing foreigners with locals stated:

> They just wanted to get rid of us foreigners and replace us with locals. We know there is a policy that says so. It is unfortunate that at the time when South Africans were not interested to work in the mines they employed people from outside South Africa to work in the mines. They employed us when it suited them. Now that the South African are getting interested in working at the mines, they have to send us away.

One of the respondents who cited xenophobia as the reason for retrenchments stated that members of the local community from the area in which the mine was located were very hostile to foreigners. He alleged that this situation was exacerbated by the *modus operandi* of their trade union, which preferred

to hold its meetings in the villages. This gave the impression that they served the interests of the locals rather than all the workers at the mine. He stated:

> They always told us that the mine was established on their land. They did not want any outsiders to work in the mine. The mine owners had to send us away to avoid xenophobic killings at the mine.

Some of the respondents believed that the retrenchments were specifically meant to remove Basotho and not just foreigners in general, from the mines. One respondent who held this view stated:

> We were told that the mines were retrenching because the price of gold had gone down internationally and companies were not making enough money to pay us and keep operating. Yes, this is the information that we were given about retrenchment. However, when we looked at the situation closely it appeared to us that the industry was targeting Basotho workers only.

Notwithstanding viability problems the desire to replace foreigners with locals, therefore, made a significant contribution to the retrenchments. With the movement of the rural black population to the urban areas, high unemployment levels in South Africa became more pressing (Morojele 2004). Crush (1995:19) argues that:

> ... the historical argument that South Africans would not work in the mines for the wages that the industry could afford to pay ceased to have much credibility.

This was particularly because wages increased sharply with the rise in the gold price. To address the growing level of unemployment in South Africa, an internalisation policy was introduced, and mining industries began to replace foreign labour with South Africans. Mining companies started to employ directly at their own gates (Crush et al. 1991), which was far more cost effective for them because they did not have to pay recruiting agencies for their services. The implementation of this policy reduced the number of novice recruitments from foreign countries such as Lesotho, and it lowered the general intake of foreign labour significantly (McNamara 1995). Preference was given to South Africans, especially for long-term employment categories, such as jobs in administration and skilled production. However, foreign workers still filled the highest skilled positions as a result of their long service in the industry. Since novices from outside South Africa were deliberately not employed, there was a noticeable age difference between the foreign employees, who were older than the new South African recruits (Crush 1995).

Lack of education was mentioned by 19 out of the 26 former mine workers interviewed, indicating a general belief among them that their

retrenchment was motivated by the desire by their former employers to replace them with those who were better educated. This perception had a significant contribution to the development of positive attitudes towards education by the former mine workers.

Attitudes Towards Education Before Retrenchment

Before retrenchment, respondents generally had a nonchalant attitude towards education. That is partly of the reason why many of them either did not attend school at all or dropped out before completing primary or secondary levels. Some respondents stated that they opted out of school despite advice from parents and other relatives not to do so. One such respondent stated:

> My parents tried to convince me to continue with my education but I refused. I did not think education was important and I would mind the family cattle. After initiation, I continued to take care of my parents' livestock until I left for the mines.

For others, they could tolerate school for as long as they were still under the age at which they could be legally employed in the mines. As a result, attending school was a way of passing the time while waiting to become of age. The following statement by one of the respondents illustrates this point:

> In 1989 I obtained my Standard Seven certificate, and enrolled for Form One. I dropped out of school before I completed Form One and went for initiation. After the initiation, I had become of age so I went decided to go to the mines.

Another one stated:

> I did not attend school for a long time. I only went as far as Standard Four but had to drop out because I had become of age and had to start working.

These findings are consistent with those of Maphosa (2011) in his study of a migrant sending community near the Zimbabwe-South African border where many young people remained at school only until they felt ready to go to South Africa. Some of them did not even wait for their results after writing their school examinations in December.

Education in Lesotho

Lesotho has been offering free primary education since 2000. The revised Education Act of 2010 makes primary education free and compulsory. The Act makes it an offence for parents to negligently fail to ensure that their children are enrolled and regularly attend school. While opportunities for education are being made available, formal employment opportunities continue to decrease. Self-employment appears to be the alternative for the many

school leavers, university graduates, and retrenched mineworkers. As a result, various organisations have initiated skills training programmes for former migrants. The Migrant Labourers Development Agency (MDA) coordinates a two-week micro-enterprise development programme sponsored by NUM, targeting rural areas where most of the retrenched migrant workers live (Philip 1995). The government of Lesotho also established the Ntlafatso Skills Training Centre (NSTC), with the aim of equipping retrenched mineworkers with skills that would enable them to fill productive employment opportunities or to start their own businesses. The three-month programmes offered include plumbing and carpentry. Both initiatives offer programmes free of charge.

Attitudes Towards Education After Retrenchments

Evidence from this study indicates a general change towards a positive attitude to education by many former mine workers. This is attributable to their retrenchment experiences, some of whom attribute it to low levels of education, failure to secure employment back home because of lack of formal education, and usable skills and the efforts by the government of Lesotho and its development partners in the provision of education.

Out of the twenty-six men interviewed, twenty-four of them reported that they now considered education to be important. For some respondents, retrenchment marked a turning point in their lives as an experience that has led them to appreciate the importance of education. Many regretted their decision to leave school when they had the opportunity to continue, especially those whose parents were able and willing to pay for their schooling. Others blamed their parents for failure to appreciate the importance of education and their consequent failure to facilitate and encourage them to pursue it. There are respondents who expressed regret at not attending *skuru mine* (mine schools) while they were still employed. One of them commented:

> I don't think there is anything more important than education with respect to securing livelihoods. Education is extremely important. Everybody should be encouraged to pursue some education.

Another one stated:

> It is only now that I understand the importance education. I wasted my time by dropping out of school to go to the mines. If I had not defied my parents and continued with my education I might have not worked in the mines. I behaved immaturely by deciding to leave school and was attracted by the immediate benefits of working in the mines and failed to think about my future.

The former migrants generally attributed their retrenchment and failure to secure jobs back home to lack of education. One of pointed out:

> Due to my lack of education or skills, I cannot possibly obtain a job in this country. What can I present to the employers? They ask for certificates before they can consider you for employment. Lack of education is a serious limitation for me, it is big problem.

Although the former migrants generally perceived education as an important tool in securing sustainable livelihoods, some of them believed that they were past school going age. They however, expressed the desire to facilitate their children in getting an education. One of them pointed out:

> Well, I cannot do it now because of my age. I feel I am now too old for that. I just want to ensure that my children go to school.

There were some, however, who still had aspirations to get education or skills training. These believed that the acquisition of knowledge and skills would enhance their chances of getting jobs back home. One of them who indicated that he aspired to be a teacher stated:

> ... a teacher has a long working life and there is never a time when he/she does not have a job.

One of the major concerns expressed by the ex-miners is that the mines were no longer interested in an uneducated and unskilled workforce.

Thabane and Guy (1984) found that retrenchment and subsequent inability to secure alternative employment back home led to a sense of failure and disappointment. Daniels (2002) observes that the economic and social challenges faced by the former mine workers have made them realise that skills development is not an option.

Discussion

Asis (2006) observes that the evolution of the culture of migration in the Philippines was aided by the institutionalisation of migration. He points out that the government of the Philippines facilitates migration, regulates the operations of the recruitment agencies and looks out for the rights of its migrant workers. This is because the remittances sent back home by migrants make an important contribution to the country's economy. As a result of the country's extreme economic dependency on South Africa, the government of Lesotho has historically encouraged its young men to migrate to South Africa to seek employment. Labour migration has always been institutionalised through the contract labour system. The government of Lesotho did not

pay much attention to the provision of education because employment in the mines did not require any formal education or skills. This was also to the benefit of the mine owners (Morojele 2004).

Since 2000 government began to offer free primary education in order to improve the literacy levels in the country, with the ultimate objective of alleviating the unemployment crisis (Morojele 2004). The government considered education and training to be effective poverty eradication strategies and a prerequisite for people to participate in the labour market. Organisations both inside and outside Lesotho have initiated training for migrant labourers to curb the unemployment problem. Combined with the general perception among retrenched migrants that they were retrenched because they had limited or nor educational qualifications, this has led to more positive attitudes towards education by the former miners. The positive attitudes towards education were in anticipation of the benefits of education, particularly that it would enhance the employability of the former miners back home. This change in attitudes towards education is indicative of a change in the culture of migration that has been prevalent among many Basotho communities. The changes in attitudes towards education can only evolve into a change in the culture of migration if there are tangible benefits accruing from pursuing an education rather than migrating at an early age. This means that besides providing education, the country has to develop its capacity to create jobs to absorb its graduates. The problem is that Lesotho has a very low employment creation capacity (CBL 2001). According to Gay (2000: 66) since the onset of the retrenchments,

> 'The problem is becoming increasingly acute as the population continues to grow, and employment opportunities consistently fail to meet an ever-increasing demand for jobs'.

As the population increases, jobs increasingly become scarce and migration continues to be a more attractive route to employment and social and economic mobility. The country might, in the absence of large-scale institutionalised migration in the form of the contract labour system, experience an increase in irregular migration.

Conclusion

The notion of the culture of migration is used in migration literature to refer to a way of life where migration is a norm. It is a very useful concept in explaining why migration takes place in some communities. Like many cultural explanations of human behaviour, the concept of the culture of migration is at risk of being employed in a deterministic way in which culture

is presented as a constant which constrains human beings to behave in particular ways. The culture of migration is a phenomenon that develops and changes as people relate to changing realities in their environment. A culture of migration develops where the community benefits more from migration than non-migration. This means that a culture of migration will change if the benefits of migration are outweighed by those of non-migration.

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