CHAPTER 12
Challenges of Skills Transfer for Zimbabwean Migrant Workers in the Diaspora:
A Systematic Review

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Abstract

The level of education and skills plays an important role in opening opportunities for migrants in the host country's labour market. However, migrants' skills may not be easily accepted and adaptable in a host country's labour market due to different work practices and structural differences in jobs. This research aims to determine the challenges of skills transfer from the home country by migrants to the Diaspora labour market and to examine how migrants adapt to the host country's labour market skills demands. It draws on the human capital theory propounded by Becker in the 1960s as a theoretical lens for understanding, analysing, and interpreting the role of technical skills in sustaining the livelihoods of migrant workers. The research is based on document analysis and a systematic literature study. Some documents include labour market evaluation reports and research papers on migration and labour. Findings suggest that the lack of portability of embodied competencies for low-skilled migrants challenges the transferability of Zimbabwean migrants' skills and their relevance. In contrast, skilled migrants are deskilled in high technological jobs and have an inadequate orientation to adapt to the Diaspora labour market. The study helps understand the challenges of getting jobs by labour migrants in the Diaspora. It makes recommendations that can help in their employability for host countries to benefit from migrant labour. Further-

more, the study adds a voice to the meaningful development of policy in Southern Africa for migrants retooling and skilling to fully participate in the mainstream labour market of the host country. For policymakers, governments must simultaneously consider the implications of their labour regulations when formulating immigration laws, aligning them with international labour and immigration laws and agreements.

Keywords: Diaspora, migrant, technical skills, relevance, skills transfer, informal sector.

1   Introduction

Zimbabweans significantly contribute to the regional migrant workforce in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. However, it is challenging to determine their exact numbers due to the nature of their migration patterns (International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2020). According to gathered statistics, the number of international migrants in the SADC region was 1.89 million in 2008. By 2017, this number had risen to 5.01 million, indicating a significant increase of 165.4% (SADC 2018). Although Zimbabwe spends a considerable proportion of its budgetary allocations on human capital development with relevant skills for the local labour market, it has not mitigated labour migration to other countries (Mbongwe 2018).

Evidence from the Southern African region shows that migration can be a powerful driver for sustainable development for migrants and their communities in countries of origin, transit, and destination (IOM 2020). However, when migration policies or other relevant policies do not consider the needs of migrants in terms of skills transfer, migrant workers can come under strain, and development gains from migration can be jeopardised. Specifically, developing countries, including Zimbabwe, adopted skills development through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) starting at the school level to fight unemployment, societal inequalities, and poverty (Coltart 2012). Despite dedicated efforts to address the mismatch between learner skills and the labour market, technological advancements pose challenges in predicting the emergence of relevant skills for the modern workplace, including those needed in the local labour market. For instance, the World Economic Forum (2016) suggested that 65% of today's children will most likely take up jobs that do not

currently exist due to the fast technology changes in the workplace. As such, the relevance and transferability of skills acquired from one country to another are also impacted (UNESCO 2018). This study examined the challenges of skills transfer for Zimbabwean migrant workers in the Diaspora. To accomplish the objectives of this chapter, the following objectives were investigated:

- The challenges associated with skills transfer by migrants in the Diaspora labour market.
- The adaptation process of migrants to meet the skills demand of the Diaspora labour market.

2 Overview

The level of education and skills directly affects migrants' skills transfer and adapting to different labour markets with different contexts (Sanz 2018). It further affects migrants' opportunities to develop other skills in a host country despite the expectation that migrants must use already acquired education and competencies to learn new skills and enhance their employability (Chiswick & Miller 2011). However, skills transfer from one country to another, and skills relevance can be relative to the context of available jobs and technology in the host country (UNESCO 2015). Sanz (2018) argues that migrant skills' relevance is often affected by a foreign skills mismatch in the labour market, different work practices, and structural differences in jobs. Hence, this study investigated the challenges of skills transfer for Zimbabwean migrants in the Diaspora. Millions of Zimbabweans migrated to other countries in search of employment opportunities.

Although labour migration in Southern Africa was recorded even in the 1950s, the migration of Zimbabweans significantly started at the beginning of the 1990s due to the economic downturn induced by the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) (Garwe 2014). The economic downturn led to the massive retrenchment of workers because of the downsizing and subsequent closure of several companies operating in the country (Murinda 2014:5). The number of retrenched workers and unemployed youths started to rise unabated, coupled with limited labour market options for those finishing school and other forms of training. For example, the 2012 population census in Zimbabwe revealed that 36% of youths aged between 15 and 24 were part of the 84% of the unemployed population (ZIMSTAT 2012). According to Zimstat (2022),

since 1980, the highest outflow of migrants from Zimbabwe was recorded in 2021. For example, Zimstat reports that 908 914 migrants left Zimbabwe from 21 to 30 April, with 84% seeking greener pastures, and 28% of the emigrants were in the 20 to 24-year age group. The situation triggered the migration of several people from the country, both unskilled, skilled, and professionals, to the Diaspora in search of employment and other economic opportunities to sustain their livelihoods (IOM 2020). The study also investigates how Zimbabwean migrants adapted their skills to find jobs to fit the Diaspora labour market skills demands.

3   Theoretical Framework

The authors draw on the human capital theory propounded by Becker in the 1960s as a theoretical lens for understanding, analysing, and interpreting the role of TVET in skills development for the future workforce in Zimbabwe. The human capital theorists such as Mincer (1989) and Schultz (1963) argue that resources are expended voluntarily for the enhancement of intellectual capital productivity (Becker 1994). The human capital theory also emphasises that human capital is developed differently between individuals in different countries with specific needs, norms, and values. However, due to migration trends, individuals with different practical skills and competencies are not bound to specific work locations. According to the OECD (2014), migrants acquire skills and abilities and supplement the host country's human capital stock. For an all-inclusive representation of human capital-labour outcome linkages, the supply-side analysis must be harmonised with the demand-side analysis (Kingombe 2012). Providing the right skills for the labour force is a vital issue for any policymaker, not simply an adequate number of jobs for the workforce. The human capital theory is also concerned about skills relevance, whether available jobs are of good quality, and whether self-employment is an economic option (Mincer 1989). Concerning the demand side, it should include policy issues related to the curriculum and programme structure, other than policy issues that affect the operation of labour outcomes, for example, the skills mismatch of skills and training in labour markets (Robeyns 2006). The overriding assumption of this theory is that education and training are critical for empowering people to be productive in their lives. For human capital theorists, an educated populace is a productive populace with no specific boundaries (Becker 1994). The researchers posit that the adoption of the human

capital theory to explain Diaspora skills transfer should be, to a certain extent, valid because investment in educating the migrants in their country of origin is rationally driven by the motives of migrants pursuing social mobility upward and more life chances in the host countries (Tan 2014). The theory ties in well with the major aim of TVET education in Zimbabwe, which aims to equip its people with internationally recognised skills to sustain people's lives in the local formal and informal employment sectors and beyond borders.

4 Challenges of Migrants' Skills Transfer
4.1 *Migrants' Skills Relevance*

Although people migrate hoping to find jobs in the host country, the migrants often face the challenge of foreign skills mismatch in the host country's labour market with different work practices and structural differences in jobs (International Labour Organisation (ILO) 2018). According to Chiswick and Miller (2011), structural changes in jobs due to technological-driven work tasks affect the relevance of migrant skills in the host country's labour market. For instance, Hagan, Lowe, and Quingla (2013) found that some migrants with predominantly craft skills found their skills to be more fragmented in the advanced production industries in the USA than at home and had to either deskill or reskill on the job. Hagan *et al.* (2013) suggested that the transferability of technical skills acquired in a home country with different norms and work practices into different cultural settings of host countries' labour market can be a challenge. In a study to explore Zimbabwean teachers' motives for migrating to South Africa and their future career plans, de Villiers and Weda (2017) established that most teachers improved their academic qualifications to get employment in the tertiary sector. The teachers also intended to migrate to other countries with more competitive salaries. Daniels and Green (2014) acknowledge that the skills, expertise, experience, knowledge, and cultural heritage that migrant teachers bring can enormously impact learners, education, and society.

Other studies on migrants' employability suggest that even if migrants possess relevant skills, they struggle to prove themselves due to labour market complexities, especially in the initial days (Sanz 2018; Thebe 2017). Often, there is a mismatch in employers' expectations regarding work competencies against the embodied (micro-credential) migrant skills (Anatol *et al.* 2013). Migrants must manipulate their skills to suit the job on one side, and employers evaluate them on the other side (IOM 2018). Thus, the issue of skills relevancy

remains key in placing migrants in the host country's labour market and can be, more problematic, especially for low-skilled migrants (Dadush 2014). UNESCO (2020:2) also argues that the situation is worse for low-skilled migrants without paper qualifications as there is no consensus on whether embodied skills can complement or replace qualifications (macro-credentials). Therefore, the portability of embodied skills across borders poses more challenges to those without paper qualifications and may have to settle for low-wage jobs in precarious work situations for their competencies to be recognised. The relevance of migrant skills in a host country becomes relative, especially when migrants take up jobs, even when there is unemployment among citizens.

Constant (2014) found that the relevance of migrants' skills, especially for low-skilled jobs, was determined by their ability to adapt to the existing production technologies and motivation to learn new skills on the job. It creates a perception that low-skilled migrants' skills are relevant at certain levels that do not require subject mastery. However, the findings did not determine a correlation between migrants' skills and the jobs they did since industries adapted their production technologies to the available labour at a lower cost but increased production.

SADC has adopted a new Labour Migration Action Plan (2020 - 2025) to promote skills transfer and match labour supply and demand for regional development and integration (SADC 2021). Furthermore, the Action Plan is in line with Article 19 of the SADC Protocol on Employment and Labour, which seeks to protect and safeguard the rights and welfare of migrant workers and to give them better opportunities to contribute to their countries of origin and destination. Against this background, it is envisaged that implementing the adopted policy instrument through a multi-sectoral approach will contribute to the protection of labour migrants' rights and allow them to make a significant developmental impact on both countries of origin and destination.

4.2   Challenges Due to Skills Recognition

Migrants often face several challenges despite the call by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UNSDG) number 10.7, which calls for 'safe, regular and responsible migration through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies to reduce inequality within and among countries' (UN 2017). In general, migrants face numerous barriers to the transferability of their skills when their home-acquired skills and qualifications

are not validated in the national framework for equivalency in the host country (UNESCO 2020:2). When there is no equivalency evaluation, migrant skills are not recognised in the host country. Ultimately this affects the utilisation of acquired skills and wage rates. In Southern Africa, the lack of a regional framework for recognising prior learning policy impacts the relevancy of migrants' skills. Such a framework and policy can be used to develop tools to assess migrant's skills, especially for those without paper qualifications to attest to embodied skills (UN 2020). For example, in Europe, there is a system of mutual recognition of qualifications for EU migrants in principle (Iredale 2005). Applicable policies and procedures differ according to the origin of the migrant. However, professional immigrants from outside the EU face challenges since each country assesses them differently (ibid). Similarly, immigrants who studied engineering outside Canada and in institutions not in the USA, UK or France must take up a programme of study that the Canadian association accredits to work as a professional engineer (Boyd & Thomas 2001). It also applies to other professional groups like doctors and teachers (Boyd & Schellenberg 2008; Chikanda 2010).

A study by Chikarara (2019) on the precariousness experienced by Zimbabwean immigrant engineers in South Africa revealed some bureaucratic challenges in obtaining relevant work permits from the Department of Home Affairs. Furthermore, the study found that South African universities' reluctance to recognise Zimbabwean qualifications on par with local qualifications and workplace insecurities placed migrant engineers in precarious positions. Another study (Chikarara 2016) examined how the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) undervalued the academic qualifications of migrant engineers. Chikara found that Zimbabwean engineers were frustrated by the long and complicated process for professional recognition and perceived ECSA as a 'gatekeeper' reserving the engineering profession for South African engineers in a bid to ensure occupational closure for immigrants. Such practices may affect several migrant workers under different professional bodies. Chikarara (2019) recommends that Southern Africa would benefit from a harmonised training system that would produce mutually recognised qualifications throughout the region like that in the European Union (EU) (Iredale 2005). Consequently, this has the potential to help reduce skills wastage.

In a critical analysis of the experiences of Zimbabwean social workers in the United Kingdom (UK) by Chogugudza (2018), differences in social work culture between Zimbabwe and the UK were noted. These differences created

significant barriers to successfully integrating Zimbabwean social workers into the professional system (Willett & Hakak 2020). Chogugudza (2018) found that Zimbabwean social workers could transfer basic social work knowledge and skills they acquired in Zimbabwe when practising in the UK, with relevant adjustments, possibly because the British model of social work strongly influenced social work practice in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, he found barriers to the transfer of knowledge and skills. These were rooted in social, cultural, political, and legislative differences between Zimbabwe and the UK (Chogugudza 2018).

4.3 Challenges Due to Labour Regulations

Labour regulations in a host country often limit migrants from certain mainstream jobs. Despite anti-discrimination legislation to promote equal employment opportunities for migrant workers, Ahmad (2020) found that discrimination continues to marginalise migrants from the mainstream job market. While discrimination disadvantages migrant labour, it also dampens career advancement, job prestige, period of employment, and wage levels (ibid). However, the question is, who perpetuates the discrimination, employers, society, or labour regulations?

In Botswana, work permit application regulations for professionals demand applicants to attach, amongst other documents, clearance from relevant professional regulatory bodies and proof by the employer that they could not find citizens for such jobs. At the same time, citizens who want to employ migrants in low-skilled job categories such as farm workers, seasonal workers, and maids must support work permit applications for prospective migrant employees with much documentation, which often discourages citizen employers. Therefore, according to the Employment of Non-Citizens Act No. 11, 1983 (Chap 47:02), no non-citizens in Botswana are allowed to engage in any occupation unless they have obtained a valid work permit granted by the Botswana government. In a study by Claassen (2017) on the explanation of xenophobia in South Africa, findings suggested that labour migrants face resistance from natives when there is competition for jobs and other resources, and this varied between races and age groups. For instance, the study revealed that most black labour migrants actively searching for employment in the 25 to 49 age groups had their employment prospects dampened by xenophobia attacks. Despite the lack of proper documentation, which kept several Zimbabwean migrants out of the regularised labour market, several migrants

are active in the South African labour market (Bimha 2017). To protect employment for local citizens in South Africa, The Department of Labour and the Department of Home Affairs introduced stricter border access controls to restrain illegal immigrants. Undocumented labour migrants find jobs in the informal sectors where legal rights and social security are precariously coupled with low wages. The Employment Services Act, Act No. 4 of 2014, Sections 8 and 9 in South Africa, which prohibit employers from employing non-citizens before obtaining work visas, are being further enforced to promote the employment of citizens in a country facing an unprecedented 34.9% unemployment rate. The Employment Act of 2014 and its regulations are also meant to protect the labour rights of migrant workers since some employers deliberately prefer foreign migrants as sources of cheap labour as they are prepared to take 'anything' for wages (Konle-Seidl 2018:23).

4.4 Challenges Faced by Low-Skilled Migrants

Several reports document numerous challenges faced by low-skilled migrants in getting jobs in the host countries (UN 2017; IOM 2018). The numerous migrant challenges documented include a lack of job opportunities, non-recognition of embodied skills not supported by paper qualifications and language problems. The challenges identified significantly impact migrants' employment prospects and their ability to integrate into their communities (IOM 2018). These challenges persist even though migrants initially expect better economic opportunities and improved quality of life in the host country.

4.5 Level of Skills and Type of Jobs

Studies on migration and types of jobs in Europe revealed that migrants with low skills and qualifications find it challenging to secure decent jobs in the formal sector (Lucci *et al.* 2016). Low-skilled migrants are more likely to find jobs in the informal sectors where generally, the rewards are low. A study in Kenya about Somali low-skilled migrants and those from Eritrea in Saudi Arabia has shown that young migrants and refugees with low-educational qualifications cannot access decent jobs (UN 2017). Other studies by IOM (2018) and Mlambo (2017) found that migrants with low skills and qualifications tend to take up jobs not taken up by citizens, especially those which are manual, menial, and of meagre wages. In such circumstances,

migrants face further social integration and personal economic development challenges. Therefore, low migrant skills can be recognised in the informal sector, where paper qualifications may not be in demand.

Similarly, it is important to note that a significant portion of Zimbabwean migrants, who constitute the majority, are engaged in informal sectors such as construction, agriculture, and domestic services, which are not captured in conventional labour market statistics (Makina 2012:1). The fact that they work the so-called '3D' jobs –dirty, dangerous, and degrading – does not necessarily mean they are low-skilled (Fink & Gentile 2019; IOM 2020). The lack of recognition of their qualifications and opportunities in their home countries may force many migrants into occupations for which they are over-qualified. As a result, this also contributes to brain waste and inhibits skills transfer.

Chiswick and Miller (2010) suggest that, to some extent, the economic success of a migrant is determined by the educational background, level, and relevance of acquired technical skills to the host country's labour market and how much the migrant will invest in other skills after arrival in a host country. Although people migrate with some skills, the migrants can adapt acquired skills to the host country's labour market skill requirements. This adaptability gives a perception of skills transferability. Migrants must adapt learned skills from home to invest in new skills in the host country's labour market (Campbell & Crush 2012). Even if migrants want to upskill in the host country, they lack the knowledge of available options, access to learning schools and financial support to enrol (UN 2020).

Further, the lack of recognition of prior learning (RPL) often disadvantages those migrants with only embodied skills and no paper qualifications in obtaining work permits to be integrated into the mainstream labour market (IOM 2018). Migrants, therefore, need to possess qualities such as honesty, resourcefulness, and ingenuity to navigate through existing systems with patience and persistence. Additionally, migrants must establish strong social networks, as they play a vital role in providing referrals and personal support when needed. Hence, this study examined the challenges of home-acquired migrants' skills transfer to the labour market in the Diaspora.

4.6   Poor Social Networks to Find Jobs

Labour migration studies found that migrants often face challenges getting their first employment due to lacking social networks to direct job search. For

example, Konle-Seidl (2018:23) notes that labour migrants entering a country without a job offer, find it difficult to get jobs due to legal restrictions on the labour market and rely on social networks to get their initial jobs. Therefore, people would likely migrate to countries with personal and family ties for better arrival reception, survival in the initial days, and initial job referrals (Anatol *et al.* 2013).

It can, therefore, be inferred that migrants rely on personal contacts and social networks to get information about job opportunities. For example, Pellizzari (2010) posits that in Europe, more than one-third of migrant workers reported finding their jobs through friends and relatives. About 42% of low-skilled migrant workers in Italy's vineyards found their current jobs through personal contacts (ibid). Therefore, other than the relevancy of migrant skills to the job market, the ability to have social connections can help in the job search. Bauer *et al.* (2009) found that social support and networking, also known as 'social capital,' were useful when adapting, particularly for those with similar cultural backgrounds, identities, and beliefs (Willett & Hakak 2020). The effectiveness of interpersonal skills shows how migrants adapt to the job search in the host country's labour market.

Studies by Wong (2007) and Colussi (2015) found that in Europe, people of the same nationality, religious background, and speakers of the same language helped each other to find jobs. The same studies accounted for 26% of non-Western migrants who got their first jobs in Denmark through social and personal contacts. Individuals from the same country of origin often refer fellow citizens to their employers, leading to increased rates of arrival-job offers to migrants (Colussi 2015). In another study, Mlambo (2017) found that Somalis in South Africa find jobs in Muslim businesses or work alongside each other in the informal sector. Zimbabweans also tend to work alongside each other in the agricultural and construction sectors. However, the social networks may build working cohorts which negatively impact the rate of social integration of migrants when migrants remain bonded in the comfort of their cohorts. Slow social integration can further lead to the slow acquisition of other skills, such as the ability to speak local languages, and acquisition of local job skills, and cause a reduction in job-search efforts to such an extent that some migrants may remain jobless for a long time (Colussi 2015).

Despite many technocrats from Zimbabwe migrating to developed countries recently, low-skilled Zimbabwean migrants tend to migrate within the region (Mlambo 2017). This trend is probably because of proximity, and social

and family networks, even in situations where reception conditions may be inadequate, hostile or indifferent (Mlambo 2017; Crush *et al.* 2017; Segatti 2017). On the other hand, Kopinsk and Polus (2014) argue that there is relative sympathy toward Zimbabwean migrants in Southern Africa dating back to Zimbabwe's pre-independence era. There is always some form of solidarity for each other among the main revolutionary parties in the region when there are economic and destabilisation issues. For example, Betts and Kaytaz (2009) revealed that Zimbabweans have been migrating in large numbers into neighbouring Botswana since early 2000, and an estimated more than 40,000 Zimbabwean migrants were staying in Botswana by 2009. Furthermore, Botswana adopted an 'open door' policy for Zimbabwean labour seekers due to the country's lack of human resources; Zimbabweans could even take up powerful positions in some cases (ibid).

Several thousands of Zimbabweans also migrated into South Africa, the biggest economy in the region. South Africa was the leading destination country for many migrant workers not only in the region but also in the continent accounting for 16.5% of the total migrant population in Africa (2018). According to Viljoen and Wentzel (2020), attempts by the South African government to contest regional trans-border legacies of low-skilled labour and porous borders have caused defects in the management and regulation of low-skilled immigration. Limited opportunities to regulate low-skilled migrants' stay in South Africa through the 2002 Immigration Act resulted in many low-skilled migrants using refugee dispensation offered by the 1998 Refugee Act to obtain legalised status (Viljoen & Wentzel 2020). This regulation led to a flood of low-skilled migrants applying for asylum in South Africa. For example, The Department of Home Affairs in South Africa introduced the Documentation of Zimbabweans Project in 2010. This project was meant to regulate the undocumented Zimbabweans while allowing the migrants to work, study or conduct business in South Africa for a maximum period of four years. The Zimbabwean Dispensation Project has had extensions over the years, although under different names. The regulation through the dispensation project also enhanced skills transfer for the low-skilled migrant workers.

4.7 Language Challenges

Sanz (2018) points out that education helps migrants to learn new skills, such as language, in a host country. Other studies from countries receiving a heavy

influx of migrants, like Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, found the ability to speak local languages in the destination country to be a major factor for migrants being placed into the labour market (Sanz 2018; Chiswick & Miller 2014). On the other hand, fluency in a local language is an important skill for migrants' social integration, job search, economic development, and development of other new skills (ILO 2020). For instance, Lochmann *et al.* (2018) established a positive correlation between migrants' ability to speak local languages and the probability of securing employment in France, Germany, and the UK (Chiswick & Miller 2010). According to Lochmann *et al.* (2018), their research in France revealed that in 2013, 65% of migrants with excellent French speaking and writing skills were employed, compared to 56% of those with limited language skills. Similar patterns were observed in previous years, with employability rates of 59% to 43% in 2011 and 48% to 32% in 2010 after language lessons. These findings indicate that proficiency in the local language has a positive impact on the employability of migrants.

However, Sanz (2018) suggests that migrants may still learn local languages through social interaction in the communities in which they stay and at work. Other than employment benefits to migrants in the UK, Budria and Swedberg (2015) found that the ability to speak English influences the migrant's market value in the labour market. Therefore, language fluency also affects individuals' productivity and level of income. This study determined the extent to which migrants from Zimbabwe experience language as a barrier to finding jobs and economic improvement in the Diaspora.

Although English is the official language used for communication and business in the Southern Africa region, understanding the challenges that Zimbabwean migrants experience concerning their ability to speak local languages in the host countries and its impact on their employability is vital (Blaauw *et al.* 2012). For example, in Botswana, most people have a working knowledge of English, and just below 2.8% of Botswana's population are English first-language speakers (Chebane 2016). Despite the common ethnic languages between some tribes in Zimbabwe and Botswana, English is the official language used for communication and business in the two countries. However, Botswana has several native languages, which migrants must cope with in their job searches (Chebane 2016). The same applies even in South Africa, where there are several native languages with which Zimbabwean migrants must cope in their job searches and social integration (Moyo 2020).

Even though it is important to orient new migrants in a country to local

languages to improve their integration, efforts to provide such language lessons are hampered by the nature of uncoordinated migration and incoherent strategies (UN 2020). Although the provision of language orientation has been possible for migrants and refugees in some OECD countries (OECD 2010), it is, however, a challenge to offer such language lessons, particularly for Zimbabwean migrants, because several of them are not registered at entry points into neighbouring countries making it difficult for coordinated languages lessons.

4.8 Challenges Due to the Fourth Industrial Revolution on Migrants' Skills Relevance

According to Schwab (2016), the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is unfolding globally, changing how work is done and demanding technological skills from employees. The 4IR is bound to impact how we understand the world of work. The fusion of digital technologies characterises the 4IR, the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), nanotechnology, and traditional industries at an exponential rate (McKinsey Digital 2015; Xu, David and Kim 2018). To that end, economic activities are increasingly digitalised and interconnected. Indeed, some expect increasing and persistent technological unemployment due to the disruptive effects of the innovative use of information and communications technology (ICT), the diffusion of learning robotics, the Internet of things, and 3D printing (Brynjolfsson & McAfee 2014). Digitalisation in several employment sectors is a challenge and an opportunity for migrant workers (Ariyanti and Jannah 2020). One of the challenges of this digitalisation is multiple uncertainties, as these impacts are not limited to potential job losses or gains (Walwei 2016).

For instance, lower-skilled workers are positioned to lose their jobs in the face of labour-saving 4IR advances, and migrants are not only at risk of this but also blamed for precipitating lower labour standards by accepting less attractive employment (Mckenzie 2017; Man & Man 2019; Fink & Gentile 2019). Walwei (2016) refers to this as skill-biased technological change. According to Walwei (2016), in the case of capital-skill complementarity, the demand for highly skilled workers performing creative tasks will increase further. Low-skilled migrant workers might be forced to find work abroad because of the tight competition.

The highly skilled migrants connect their countries of origin to the

knowledge and economic opportunities generated by the 4IR process in the advanced countries (Mckenzie 2017; Commonwealth Secretariat 2018; Fai 2020). This connection tends to increase skill transferability to the country of origin. As migrants increasingly use social media to acquire information on opportunities and support networks, AI can be a game-changer in detecting the patterns of undocumented migration to devise adequate policy responses. Workers may need to reskill or upskill to adapt to the reorganisation of tasks and the emergence of new tasks to prevent potential job loss and navigate transitions to new jobs (Jarrahi 2018; Lane & Saint-Martin 2021). This adaptability will not only mean acquiring AI-related skills but also skills that AI cannot perform so well, such as creative and social intelligence, reasoning skills, and dealing with uncertainty. Under the 4IR, talent competition will escalate globally. Thus, the migration of highly skilled migrants imposes greater challenges for countries to mobilise their talented people, who disperse extensively across the world (Danchev & Porter 2018). The 4IR will result in 'major disruptions to labour markets in terms of the growth in wholly new occupations, new ways of organising and coordinating work, new skills requirements in all jobs, and new tools to augment workers' capabilities' (World Economic Forum 2016). Hunt (2010) posits that evidence from the United States suggests that skilled immigrants boost research, innovation, and technological progress.

5   Recommendations

It is crucial to implement migration mechanisms that ensure employers in desti-nation countries recognise the education and skills credentials of migrants to mitigate the challenges of skills transfer. Skills development programmes in countries of origin should be harmonised with labour demand in the destination countries. Countries in Southern Africa need to engage in bilateral labour migration agreements through which people are trained in the country of origin and provided the choice between migrating and finding a job locally to fill labour shortages in both countries of origin and destination. Migrant workers need to reskill or upskill to adapt to the emergence of new tasks, prevent poten-tial job loss, and navigate transitions to new jobs due to the impact of 4IR. Further studies can be done to determine how migrant labour is assisted in inte-grating into the mainstream labour market in other regions of the world so that Southern Africa can also benefit. Policymakers and governments should con-

sider the implications of their labour regulations while formulating immigration laws. These regulations should be aligned with international labour and immigration laws and agreements. This approach would enable objective assessments of migrant labour rather than relying solely on the welfare policies of the host country. Additionally, conducting a comprehensive study can help determine the extent to which the ability to speak native languages has facilitated the settlement and employment of Zimbabwean migrants in the Diaspora.

6   Conclusion

The study sought to explore the challenges of home-acquired migrants' skills transfer to the labour market in the Diaspora. The transferability of Zimbabwean migrant skills and their relevance were affected by several factors. These factors include the lack of bankable proof of embodied competencies, specialised skills, deskilling in high technological jobs, inadequate orientation to adapt to the Diaspora labour market, and learning additional skills needed in the new workplace context. Although migrants arrive with skills and contribute to the human capital development of host countries, they still face challenges in skill transfer (OECD 2014). It was established that most Zimbabwean immigrants hope to find jobs in the host countries. However, in some cases, they face the challenge of foreign skills mismatch in the labour market of the host countries with different work practices and structural differences in jobs. The integration of professional immigrants in the host country's labour market is also impacted by how professional associations, local universities treat them, and employers, as experienced by Zimbabwean engineers in South Africa. Furthermore, it was found that Zimbabwean migrants with low skills and qualifications tend to take up jobs not taken up by citizens, especially those which are manual, menial, and of meagre wages (IOM 2016; Mlambo 2017). Consequently, migrants face further challenges of social integration and personal economic development. Therefore, migrants must adapt learnt skills from home to invest in new skills in the host country's labour market.

Extant literature reveals that migrants face challenges getting their first employment due to poor social networks. The observation revealed that Zimbabwean migrant workers often find employment close to each other, particularly in social work, agriculture, and construction sectors. Such social networks may build working cohorts which negatively impact the rate of social integration of migrants when migrants remain bonded in these cohorts. As a

result, the slow social integration can potentially weaken the skills transfer process for migrant workers. In addition, these migrant workers may take a long time to be able to speak the host country's languages. Communicating in a host country's language is crucial for migrants' social integration, job search, economic development, and other new skills. However, language proficiency was one of the barriers for Zimbabwean migrant workers. Providing language orientation to migrant workers as was done in OECD countries (OECD 2010) was not possible for Zimbabwean migrant workers in Botswana and South Africa because most of them were undocumented.

Some evidence indicates that the current technological changes due to the 4IR may exacerbate the ongoing trend towards job polarisation. Lower-skilled workers will most likely lose their jobs due to labour-saving 4IR automation. As a result, low-skilled migrant workers might be forced to find work abroad, upskill or reskill to remain employed. On the other hand, global competition for highly skilled migrant workers is likely to escalate. Therefore, as development strategies adjust to these technological changes, they must also account for the new skills demand they entail and, in turn, their impact on labour migration, translating into policy action in both countries of origin and destination.

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