

# **Southern African Migration Project**

## **Migration of Skills in South Africa: Patterns, Trends and Challenges**

**Migration Policy Brief No. 20**

**2006**

**Lyndith Waller  
South African Immigration Advisory Board**

**NOTE:**

SAMP would like to thank the Department of Home Affairs for permission reprint this report for the Immigration Advisory Board for a wider audience. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of SAMP or its funders. The author would like to thank the following for their comments: Mr Vic Esselaar, South African Chamber of Mines and Member of the Immigration Advisory Board; Professor Michael Kahn, Human Sciences Research Council: Knowledge Management; Mr Ian Macun, Community Agency for Social Enquiry; Dr Sally Peberdy, Southern African Migration Project; and Dr Johan van Zyl, Sanlam Ltd. In addition, special thanks are due to Dr Wilmot James, chairman of the Immigration Advisory Board, for his guidance.

## Contents

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Migration of Skills Within South Africa's Borders.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>An Overview of Outward Skills Migration .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>An Overview of Inward Skills Migration .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Is There a Problem?.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Measuring the Brain Drain .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>The Missing Statistics .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>How Does South Africa Decide What Skills Are Needed? .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Mitigating the Loss .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>10.0</b>	<b>Circulating the Benefits Back Into South Africa .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>11.0</b>	<b>The Government's Response .....</b>	<b>17</b>
11.1	Bringing In Skills From Beyond the Borders.....	17
11.2	Developing Skills Within South Africa .....	18
11.3	Retaining Existing Skills .....	20
<b>12.0</b>	<b>Valuing Human Resources.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>13.0</b>	<b>Policy Recommendations and Further Research.....</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>References and Resources .....</b>	<b>24</b>

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 It is a human inclination to want to position oneself where conditions are best for personal fulfilment, growth and success. People migrate because they perceive their environment as inadequate in terms of what they desire or deserve. The more deserving they consider themselves the more likely they will be to leave a sub-optimal environment in search of one in which they will be appreciated – through recognition or pay – and where they can develop their potential, live securely, work towards their goals and enjoy standards with which they align themselves.
- 1.2 Skilled people recognise that they have something to offer; they have a bargaining chip for a better quality of life. Their services or expertise are in demand and they encounter fewer hurdles in changing to a new environment. In a rapidly globalising world, skills can move further and more easily than ever before. Globalisation is offering increased opportunities for skilled people to migrate.
- 1.3 There is a loss to the original environment when a skilled person leaves. This loss can be measured in terms of a shrinking skills base, a decreased capacity to deliver services, diminished capital, a loss of attractiveness for investment, lost potential for invention and innovation, lower transfer of knowledge and expertise and a shrinkage in the economy. There is also a social element of loss where those left behind may feel inferior and develop hostility towards those who leave.
- 1.4 Nevertheless, it is neither ethical nor fair to expect people to curb their desire to migrate towards better circumstances – real or perceived. Governments would be ill-advised to suppress such aspirations among their people. While there is a need to recoup the loss, the most obvious policy direction would be to create an environment that fewer skilled people would consider sub-optimal. This is difficult under conditions where vast numbers of skilled people are leaving or have left. However, the bulk of research within the field of the brain drain suggests that South Africa is not under undue threat and remains capable of creating an optimal working and living environment if committed to do so.
- 1.5 In the South African context, it is essential that economic growth continues, that large investments are made in skills development and training and that attention is directed towards filling needed skills gaps. Plans should be developed to ensure that salaries of skilled professionals become internationally competitive. The participation of the diaspora should be maximised. Recognition should be given to innovators and academics who raise the standards of what South Africa is producing. Many of those who are ahead in their fields are developing brands for South Africa that will inevitably draw in greater investment for greater development.
- 1.6 Moreover, it would be wise to engage in public information campaigns highlighting employment standards and social conditions in countries that are frequent destinations for our skilled people. The fear of comparing South Africa to other countries should be pushed back by the courage to market South Africa and highlight its development. Relying on a sense of patriotism and duty is not sufficient to keep skills or entice them back home. The human dimension must be properly

considered. Are we making it worthwhile for skilled South Africans to stay in South Africa or are we leaving them no choice but to go?

## **2.0 Migration of Skills Within South Africa's Borders**

- 2.1** A “skilled” person has been broadly defined as one who has “received some sort of specialised training that results in superior technical competence, talent, or abilities that are applied in professional occupations”(1). It is these people who ensure the development of the economy.
- 2.2** The movement of professionals within South Africa is generally market-driven. Skilled workers move to take up jobs, enlarge their customer base, be closer to the hub of their industry and earn more money. Movement is generally towards and between Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. The effect is a brain drain from some urban areas in general and from rural areas specifically.
- 2.3** Often skilled people who move are making a quality-of-life decision. Newspapers recently reported on a survey of job stress levels among owners of medium-sized businesses. Interestingly, the Eastern Cape emerged as the most stressful place to do business, whereas Gauteng and the Western Cape were noted as relatively less stressful environments.
- 2.4** Professionals in the public service are paid substantially less than those working in the private sector. Accordingly, there is a migration of skills out of the public service, which hampers the government’s delivery capacity. Speaking at a parliamentary media briefing in February 2005, the Chairperson of the Public Service Commission spoke of the need to develop, retain and correctly deploy human resources within the public service. Architects, civil engineers and project managers were highlighted as being most in demand.

## **3.0 An Overview of Outward Skills Migration**

- 3.1** A survey conducted jointly by the Africa Institute of South Africa and the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) framed the concept of a “skilled” South African as a citizen, 20 years of age or older, who has matriculated, has a technikon diploma or university degree and is currently economically active(2).
- 3.2** While investigating the views of skilled South Africans across the spectrum on the brain drain, the survey compiled a set of demographics for this group. Bearing testimony to South Africa’s past, its skilled population is predominantly white and male, and resides in Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. However, among black South Africans, the skilled population consists of more females than males. The majority of skilled South Africans are between the ages of 35 and 49, although more black than white South Africans between the age of 25 and 34 are considered skilled in terms of the applied criteria.

- 3.3 At the time of the survey in 2002, the household income of black skilled citizens peaked dramatically at between R2 001 and R6 000 per month, whereas that of whites was more evenly spread with a gentle peak at between R14 001 and R20 000. The household income of black skilled South Africans surveyed did not exceed R26 000 per month, while 4% of white households exceeded R38 000. The employment rate of skilled South Africans was 57%, distributed equally between black and white race groups. However, while 1% of white skilled persons were unemployed and seeking work at the time of the survey, 11% of their black counterparts found themselves in this position.
- 3.4 Although skilled South Africans are spread across vast sectors of society, a higher proportion is employed in secondary education, the retail industry, the medical field and manufacturing. Considerable differences between white and black South Africans emerged from the survey. For instance, more skilled blacks were employed in all areas of education and research, while more skilled whites were employed in finance and banking. There were more white engineers, lawyers and accountants, but more black educators.
- 3.5 Those who had given emigration at least some thought were more or less equally distributed across race groups. Surveying the desire to emigrate, it was found that skilled black South Africans had a greater desire to leave for less than two years, while more whites desired to leave for longer than two years. Of those who had considered leaving, far fewer actually *desired* to leave. In fact, only 20% of skilled respondents considered it highly likely that they would emigrate.
- 3.6 Nevertheless, the possibility, the desire, the probability and the ability must all combine before the lengthy, expensive and complex process of emigrating actually occurs. When pressed, few admitted to having made the psychological commitment to emigrate and only 3% said it was very likely within six months, 5% within two years and 13% within five years.
- 3.7 The level of satisfaction with life in South Africa was measured against the perceived cost of living, levels of taxation, safety and security and the standard of public and commercial services. The greatest causes of dissatisfaction among skilled black South Africans were the level of taxation, the cost of living, concerns over personal safety and income levels. Skilled white South Africans bemoaned the upkeep of public amenities, levels of taxation, the cost of living and their families' safety.
- 3.8 Among skilled whites, there was overwhelming opposition to affirmative action, while 20% of skilled blacks felt opposed to this programme. Affirmative action has been quoted by the Company for Immigration, a non-governmental organisation that assists immigrants' integration into South Africa, as a key obstacle to enticing expatriates back to South Africa(3).
- 3.9 Overall, the majority of skilled South Africans believed that overseas destinations offered greater safety for themselves and their families. Most skilled whites

considered the upkeep of public amenities, customer service and the future of their children to be better overseas, while the majority of skilled blacks felt that income levels are better overseas. The opinion of skilled whites on conditions overseas inclined towards them being better overall. Skilled blacks were less disposed to consider overseas conditions superior on every aspect surveyed. The only matter more blacks than whites believed was better overseas was the ability to find the house they wanted.

- 3.10 More often skilled whites personally knew at least one other emigrant, 66% of whom were in their own profession. However, among all skilled South Africans surveyed only 7% travelled to Europe at least once a year, 3% to North America and 2% to Australia and New Zealand. First hand experience of these places, which are most frequently the destinations of migrating skilled South Africans, is therefore limited.

#### **4.0 An Overview of Inward Skills Migration**

- 4.1 In the 1980s, when emigration to Europe, North America and the oil-rich nations of the Middle East was increasing, highly qualified, experienced professionals and people working in trades migrated from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana and Uganda to South Africa. The main attraction was higher wages.

After 1986, skilled migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, including Congo, Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Zaire, Kenya and Uganda, came as temporary or permanent residents to South Africa's then nominally independent homelands. Their entry was supported by the apartheid regime as a means to prop up the homelands' education and health systems. Although relatively few in number, the skills profile of these migrants distinguished them from migrants from neighbouring states, who were traditionally unskilled mineworkers and farm labourers.

- 4.2 In December 2003, a study was released by the Scientific and Industrial Research and Development Centre under contract to the National Economic and Consultative Forum and funded by the United Nations Development Programme. The study showed that thousands of talented professionals, most notably doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers and financial experts, were leaving Zimbabwe for Britain, the United States, Australia, Botswana and South Africa. South Africa, however, has not seen a large influx of skilled Zimbabweans bolstering its professional workforce because, according to the study, these migrants tend to abandon their professions and take up menial jobs.

- 4.3 Reporting on the changing configurations of migration in Africa(4), Professor Aderanti Adepoju has noted the impact of "brain circulation" within the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The pressure of uncertain economic conditions in several countries has acted as a push factor sending skilled professionals to the "booming economies" of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. South Africa, according to Professor Adepoju, is today a convenient alternative to Europe, the United States and the Gulf. These skilled professionals work mostly in South Africa's tertiary institutions, medical establishments and the private sector.

- 4.4 In many ways, South Africa is both “a victim and a beneficiary”(5) of skills migration. The Potential Skills Base Survey recently completed by SAMP considers whether training SADC citizens does not simply equip them with a better potential for emigration. Results of the survey note that while South African students look predominantly to Europe as a destination, students from Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Namibia preferred Southern Africa.
- 4.5 South Africa is thus in a position to mitigate its own skills loss by receiving the skills of the SADC region. In so doing, skills would be retained in the region and on the continent, paving the way for enhanced regional integration and cooperation. The SADC Protocol on Education and Training in fact requires SADC member states to encourage mobility of students and researchers. However, there is a need to maintain a delicate balance as South Africa must avoid any negative impact on its relationship with other African countries. At present, SADC students comprise about 8% of South Africa’s full time tertiary enrolments.
- 4.6 It is also important to note that only 4% of the students surveyed in the region considered leaving their country of origin permanently. Most intended to return home once a year and the vast majority would remit funds. Newly skilled students would therefore retain strong bonds with their home country, hindering integration into South Africa to some extent.
- 4.7 Where the move is never intended to be permanent and South Africa is never considered “home”, it is unlikely that these skills will be retained as they develop. Newly graduated students are more likely to hone their skills in South Africa and then leave, taking with them the full potential benefit of any investment that may have been made. It is important, therefore, that education and training become more practical so that graduates are immediately ready to join the workforce as productive and competent professionals. The gap between book knowledge and experience must be closed as far as possible so that the full benefit of a graduate may be captured before they leave.
- 4.8 Among those surveyed in six SADC countries, including South Africa, more than 80% of final year students expressed patriotism and enthusiasm for helping develop their country, and 92% felt a responsibility to use their skills for their country’s benefit. Yet the survey notes an excessive negativity about current economic conditions and little expectation of improvement in the immediate future. Fewer students expected job security and a good income in the future. Most felt the problems associated with HIV/Aids will increase and few felt that safety and security would soon improve.
- 4.9 The results of the survey reveal the depth of the problem. Among those surveyed, 79% had considered emigration upon graduation; 53% considered it likely that they would emigrate within five years of graduating and 35% within six months. It has been argued that the number of those who consider emigration and those who actually emigrate are quite disparate. Yet significantly, the SAMP survey showed 19% of final year students were actually applying for work permits abroad, while

22% were applying for permanent residence or citizenship. Following the projected timeline, the figures of those considering emigration and those who will emigrate could come close to correlating.

- 4.10 Although difficult to measure, there is certainly some inward migration of returning South Africans. Those involved in campaigns to assist the return of emigrants report that they are experiencing unexpected success. Brain circulation occurs when skilled South Africans have obtained experience, knowledge and increased capacity abroad, and return to South Africa to make a greater contribution than they may have had they stayed. Brain circulation is an important dimension in a country's strategies for human resource development. To rely on it, however, South Africa would need to keep better track of where its people are, what they are doing, whether they intend to return and what they consider the necessary factors to make return not only feasible, but desirable.

## 5.0 Is There a Problem?

- 5.1 Based on the balance of inward and outward migration of skilled people, and the needs of the South African economy, the question that begs answering is whether South Africa has a skills deficit problem. It is generally agreed that Africa as a whole is experiencing a serious loss of skills. This takes place in an environment of global skills shortages, particularly in fields such as information technology and the health profession. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimates that since 1990, 20 000 professionals have left Africa every year. According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the brain drain is "one of the greatest obstacles to Africa's development".
- 5.2 The Chief Research Manager in the Knowledge Management Group of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), William Blankley, noted during a public consultation in 2003 that if South Africa loses its highly skilled people it would not be able to attract foreigners to fill their positions. Development is slowed down by the loss of skilled South Africans and a less developed environment is not conducive to attracting skills or investment. Consequent low levels of economic growth and insufficient direct foreign investment would cause underdevelopment and poverty.
- 5.3 The SADC region, under the strains of poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment, has experienced an inward flow of irregular migrants to South Africa, increased trafficking in people, weapons and drugs, and the exodus of skilled professionals. In a globalising economy, African markets find it difficult to compete. The free market system of globalisation is making borders increasingly obsolete, facilitating the loss of skilled professionals to richer economies.
- 5.4 The loss of skilled professionals is not merely a numbers issue, but also affects South Africa's skills mix. Certain professionals are more likely to remain, while others are more inclined to leave. Much depends on the working environment in South Africa and the demand and opportunities abroad. While those in the law profession may be more inclined to remain in South Africa, engineers, doctors, health care professionals, accountants, actuaries and natural scientists are more

likely to leave. Some measurement of which professionals are leaving is essential if South Africa is to maintain the right skills mix.

## **5.5 Science, Technology and Mathematics: A Report Card**

- 5.5.1** Blankley noted that particularly in the fields of science and technology, South Africa lacks the human resources to provide the innovations necessary for economic development. In 2002, 3 335 of 15 000 black matriculants passed mathematics on higher grade and only a fraction of these would study further in the fields of science and technology. South Africa is therefore not producing highly skilled black people in these fields. There is a failure in the education system to advance science-based careers.
- 5.5.2** In 2000, South Africa produced only 274 PhD graduates in the natural sciences and engineering. One can be certain that not all of these remained in the country. Indeed, research by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has revealed that up to 80% of African scientists are not working in Africa. The challenge is not only to produce more scientists, but to create an environment conducive to building a science community on African soil.
- 5.5.3** South Africa's poor performance in school level mathematics and science has been highlighted for several years. In 1996, the HSRC released an international study(6) that showed South African pupils' results lagging behind the 41 countries surveyed. Skills such as problem solving and formulating answers were found to be inadequate. The study revealed that issues such as class size do not substantially affect performance results and noted that the real root causes need to be addressed.
- 5.5.4** At the opening of the Western Cape Provincial Legislature in 2005, Premier Ebrahim Rasool announced that high school learners from Grade 8 onwards will be compelled to take some form of mathematics in 2006 and will be encouraged to also take a science subject. In fact, the intended Further Education and Training (FET) curriculum, tabled three years ago, includes a compulsory mathematics subject. The aim remains to meet the future needs of South Africa's economy.

## **5.6 Gender and the Sciences**

- 5.6.1** Speaking in February at Ispat Iscor SciTech 2005, the Minister for Science and Technology bemoaned the fact that few women and few black South Africans choose science as a study and career option. Research into gender disparity in this respect is needed and leadership must address the problem.
- 5.6.2** Conversely, the trend in developed nations in terms of gender and science is changing. Writing for the *New York Times* on 28 February 2005, the Chief Economist of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas noted that in the last 30 years the percentage of degrees awarded to women in the sciences has escalated dramatically.

Bachelor degrees in engineering have risen from 0.8% to 18.9%; geology from 11% to 44.7%; and chemistry from 18.4% to 48.4%. Masters degrees in mathematics have increased from 27.1% to 42.4% and doctorates in health sciences from 16.5% to 63.3%.

- 5.6.3 Is it likely that South Africa can follow this trend in the future? Much will depend on the opportunities afforded women to study and be employed in the science fields. However, the social responsibilities of women may increase in the coming years. Women who are left behind by migrating men, women who are increasingly heads of households and women who themselves must migrate to bring in an income are unlikely to invest in the long-term studies required by the sciences. The immediate needs created by poverty, high unemployment and even the effects of HIV/Aids, which is changing family structures, diminish the likelihood of more women choosing to invest their years in study.

## 5.7 Research and Development

- 5.7.1 During the 2005 budget vote debate, the Minister for Science and Technology committed his department to increasing funds for research and development by 2008. Based on figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), it was noted that the world average annual national investment in research and development across public and private sectors is 2.15% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). South Africa's investment stands at 0.76%. Consequently, in the last ten years the research cadre in South Africa's universities has remained almost static in number and research outputs. Increased funding is urgent and critically needed.
- 5.7.2 The National Survey of Research and Experimental Development (R&D) for 2001/02, conducted by the HSRC in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology, also suggests that South Africa is lagging behind in this field. Compared to South Africa's investment of 0.76% of GDP, China spends 1.09% on R&D. Yet China has almost half the number of full-time equivalent researchers per 1 000 of its total employed population. This suggests that there is almost twice as much money available per researcher in China than in South Africa. Where there is inadequate funding, researchers will naturally look elsewhere for employment.
- 5.7.3 A 1994 study conducted for the Science and Technology Initiative by Enver Motala showed that skilled technicians, technologists and graduates from previously disadvantaged groups represented only 7.3% of the total workforce of the eight science councils of South Africa. By 2001/02, this percentage had increased to 45.9% of the total. Nevertheless, among the full R&D workforce in South Africa, only 36.5% comprise previously disadvantaged groups.
- 5.7.4 In 2004 the HSRC published a study on the mobility of R&D workers(7) entitled "Flight of the Flamingos". This study, commissioned by the National Advisory Council on Innovation, was the first in South Africa to look at mobility of skilled workers as an area that is "fundamental to national competitiveness and [that] has

important sectoral, regional, continental and international dimensions". Outside specific sectors, such as public health care, the study concludes that evidence of a brain drain crisis in South Africa is indeed lacking. It notes, however, that much needs to be done to strengthen R&D in South Africa if we are to produce, retain and attract skilled workers.

- 5.8 At the beginning of 2004, the senior partner of South Africa's largest executive recruitment firm announced that the brain drain has started consuming skilled black professionals. The move was attributed to a feeling of inferiority created by the qualifications and international experience of returned exiles. Black South Africans are presumably leaving to gain a competitive edge. The suggestion is that they will return to South Africa at some point. For the present, however, both the heads of Business Unity SA and the South African Chamber of Business consider the trend extremely worrying and potentially disastrous for the economy.
- 5.9 The benefits of later regaining a workforce that is better skilled, further educated and more experienced must be weighed against the cost of losing a portion of the available workforce immediately. Moreover, other factors depleting South Africa's workforce must be taken into account.
- 5.10 Statistics South Africa released a report in February 2005 on mortality and cause of death in South Africa between 1997 and 2003. During this time, the mortality rate of adults increased by 62%. Although partly associated with population growth (10% over the period) and improved death notification processes, the proportional increase of deaths in the age group 20 to 49 hints at the toll being exacted by HIV/Aids. Besides deaths of children under the age of four, the mortality rate peaks distinctly at age 34. At this age, professionals have qualified and gained sufficient experience to be most valuable to the workforce, while still being young and mobile enough to migrate relatively easily. Deaths among the young black population at this age are remarkably high. The question remains whether South Africa can afford to lose more of its workforce to emigration. Moreover, HIV/Aids is exerting increasing pressure on the health sector, which is simultaneously losing health care professionals to emigration.
- 5.11 The ageing European population suggests that within the coming decades European Union (EU) countries will open their doors more widely to skilled and also semi-skilled migrants. The Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner of the EU announced in February 2005 that 25 years from now the European labour force will be 20 million workers short of the levels required to sustain growth and pay for their ageing population. The mere demand for a workforce could turn migration policies around in countries like Britain that presently prefer to close the door on semi-skilled migrants from developing nations.
- 5.12 A 2003 study on the brain drain<sup>(8)</sup> notes that the phenomenon has negative growth effects in countries where the migration rate of the highly educated is above 20%. Blankley has pointed out that figures from Statistics South Africa on the number of skilled South Africans who have emigrated since 1994 are less than half the number given by the top five destinations for our emigrants<sup>(9)</sup>. A study by the HSRC in partnership with the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research<sup>(10)</sup>

records under-counting of up to fourfold. In light of this, it becomes essential that we determine the proportion of South Africa's skilled people who are in fact emigrating.

## **6.0 Measuring the Brain Drain**

- 6.1 There is no doubt that, throughout the world, developing nations labour under the challenge of the brain drain. According to the Institute for Public Policy Research(11), 30% of Mexico's doctoral graduates and over 10% of its tertiary educated population is resident in the United States. OECD countries host 40% of the tertiary educated populations of Turkey and Morocco and almost a third of Ghana's. More than half of the tertiary-educated population of the Caribbean resides in the United States, most notably from Jamaica and Haiti which both stand at 75%. Among the secondary educated, 40% of Nicaraguans and 50% of El Salvadorians are resident abroad. Clearly the trend of movement among the educated populations of the world is from developing to developed countries.
- 6.2 This trend is logical considering the factors prompting the move. A 2002 OECD report entitled "Trends in International Migration" noted that the phenomenon of global migration is today substantially focused on labour migration. The United Nations announced in 2002 that by the year 2000 the total number of people residing in a country in which they were not born was 175 million globally. That is about 3% of the world's population. Of those 175 million, only 9% of moves are asylum-related, which the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) noted last year is an ever-decreasing percentage. In its 2002 report, the UN noted that about 1 in 70 people in developing countries is a migrant, whereas that figure is almost 1 in 10 for developed countries.
- 6.3 These statistics reflect a greater ease of movement in developed countries where travel is cheaper and travellers more wealthy. It would be a leap of faith to assume that most of the migrants in developed countries are from developing countries, yet it seems safe to say that there is a greater possibility of Africa's migrants moving off the continent than remaining within it.
- 6.4 While African migration has traditionally been to countries that have linguistic, cultural or colonial ties, movement is becoming more diverse. The initial flow of emigration from South Africa in the 1990s was largely from among the white, English-speaking, educated population. The United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the United States were clearly the destinations of preference. With the gradual emigration of Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, Namibia became a prime receiving country. Today, however, South Africans can be found all over the world.
- 6.5 The immigration policies of countries traditionally receiving South Africa's skilled people contribute pull factors to whatever push factors may exist. A study of these policies(12) shows that since 1984 Australia has welcomed anyone who could make a potential contribution to the economy, with preference being given to highly skilled immigrants. In 1997, Canada opened its doors to receive 50 000 professional specialists and entrepreneurs with 75 000 additional family members – 58% of total

immigration. The quota system of the United States favours candidates with academic degrees or specific professional skills. Issuance of H-1B visas, for highly skilled professionals, increased from 48 000 to 116 000 between 1989 and 1999. This increase is wholly attributed to immigration from developing countries.

- 6.6 The Home Secretary of the United Kingdom recently announced the introduction of a points system for all non-EU and European Economic Area migrants(13). Accordingly, highly skilled migrants, including doctors, engineers and finance experts, can enter Britain without a job offer based on points for educational qualifications, work experience and current salary. Skilled migrants, such as nurses and teachers, will be allowed to enter if they have a job offer in an area where there are job shortages. On the other hand, overseas students have to pay £250 to extend their visas, rather than the previous £155, and low-skilled migrants will have no right to settle.
- 6.7 After 11 September 2001, the United States imposed strict security checks on foreign students and scientists who wished to study, conduct research or teach in the United States. A qualified applicant typically waited two months for a visa and would then need to undergo an arduous clearance process every year. Recently, however, academic and scientific institutions and leaders in high-tech industries put pressure on the United States government to change its policies to welcome scholars and scientists again. Clearance is now given for four years to students and two years to working scientists, and the clearance process now takes less than two weeks. Once again, South Africa's highly skilled (and potentially highly skilled) are finding an easier path for emigration.
- 6.8 Emigration of skilled South Africans entails a hidden long-term cost. If the move is intended to be permanent, emigrants are likely to take their families with them. Highly educated parents place a higher premium on education for their children, encourage their development and have more available funds to invest in their future. Therefore, there is a potential further loss of skills in the next generation. Some countries have been insightful enough to lure the second generation back to their parents' country of origin, even for a temporary stay. Companies are now packaging employment offers aimed at young expatriates as an opportunity to visit the land where their parents were raised, the country of their roots, while investing their skills for that country's benefit.
- 6.9 The total cost of emigration as a permanent loss to the economy at a minimum includes the cost of educating the individual and the taxes they would have contributed to the fiscus throughout their employment cycle. By quantifying that loss we would be in a better position to promote the value of our skilled human resources and the importance of retaining them.

## 7.0 The Missing Statistics

- 7.1 Obtaining accurate statistics on the exact number of South Africans emigrating is fraught with problems. In terms of the Immigration Act, 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002), citizens and residents are not required to complete a departure form when leaving

the Republic. There is thus no departure form in an annexure to the current Immigration Regulations. Section 9(2) of the Act provides for recording entrance only in the case of residents (thereby excluding citizens). Section 3(d) provides for the departure of a resident only to be recorded by an immigration officer.

- 7.2 In terms of Regulation 17(c): “The entry or departure of a citizen shall not be recorded, provided that the Department may conduct any relevant investigation, including passport scanning, in respect of such citizen’s request to depart from or enter the Republic and, for good cause, may deny a citizen the right to depart from, but not the right to enter the Republic.” However, Regulation 17 requires the entrance and departure of both residents and foreigners to be recorded.
- 7.3 Before the Act came into force, Statistics South Africa received figures of departures from the Department of Home Affairs and regularly published these in its “Tourism and Migration” releases. Without departure forms, however, there is no way of knowing how many South Africans depart with the intention of emigrating. It is difficult to track their sojourn outside the Republic and difficult to determine in what sector they are employed abroad. Whether or not they return home to contribute their enhanced skills and experience is likewise difficult to determine statistically.
- 7.4 In terms of the Immigration Amendment Act, soon to come into force, section 9 of the principal Act is amended in 9(2) to provide for recording the entrance of a citizen. Section 9(3)(d) explicitly provides that no person shall enter or depart from the Republic unless the entry or departure is recorded by an immigration officer. An additional subsection 9(3)(e) requires that citizens, residents and foreigners must be examined by an immigration officer as prescribed before entering or departing from the Republic.
- 7.5 The amended Regulations prescribe the examination by an immigration officer in Regulation 6(2). As it relates to departures, all persons must submit to the immigration officer a form containing the information which substantially corresponds to Form 5 contained in Annexure A “if required to do so”. Form 5 is a Departure Form “only to be completed by citizens and permanent residents”. The wording “if required to do so” may refer to the status of the person. However it may allow for discretion on the part of the immigration officer which is unwelcome in view of trying to get accurate numbers. The Departure Form provides place to note emigration and occupation, but does not specify qualifications, skills or profession.
- 7.6 The entry and departure of skilled migrants is likewise not clearly tracked. The Department of Home Affairs administers the Movement Control System (MCS) as a means of recording the entry and departure of permanent residents and foreigners through South Africa’s ports of entry. In accordance with the current legislation, the entry and departure of citizens is not recorded on the MCS. At the border post or airport, when a foreigner or permanent resident presents themselves to an immigration officer, the date, name, passport number and permanent resident number is recorded on mag tape. This information is sent to head office where it is manually captured onto the MCS. There is a backlog of several months in the

capturing process at present. Immigration officials have access to the MCS, and the South African Police Service may view the system but not edit it.

- 7.7 Figures on how many skilled South Africans are working abroad could be gathered from alumni associations, professional bodies, registers and diaspora associations in receiving countries. However, in the absence of self-declared emigration statistics, accurate figures on which skills we are losing, and in what quantity, remain elusive.

## 8.0 How Does South Africa Decide What Skills Are Needed?

- 8.1 Each year, the South African government announces the need to fill the skills gaps in its economy. During the July 2003 Cabinet Lekgotla, it was agreed that South Africa “needs to attract skills to meet growth and development challenges”. The scarce skills identified included those of scientists, researchers, managers, artisans and professionals in finance, IT and engineering. The Cabinet agreed that “besides outside recruitment, we must allocate a portion of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme and the National Skills Fund to training in these areas”.
- 8.2 Section 19(1) of the Immigration Act refers to foreigners who qualify for a quota work permit. The quota is related to categories of skills determined by the Minister “at least annually by notice in the Gazette after consultation with the Ministers of Labour and Trade and Industry”. These are the skills South Africa urgently needs. (The Amendment Act specifies the category as being of a specific profession or within a specific occupational class.)
- 8.3 The first notice so published is dated 6 December 2002 and came into effect on 12 March 2003(14). Rather than specifying professions, such as radiologists or chemical engineers, the categories range from “employment opportunities in respect of which the relevant employer justifiably requires a post graduate degree and at least 5 years of professional experience” (90 000), to “employment opportunities in respect of which the relevant employer justifiably requires experience showing skills acquired through training” (60 000).
- 8.4 This notice has not been updated as required by the Act and the Department of Home Affairs confirms it is still using the original notice. The difficulty with this is that quotas that were intended to be sufficient for one year have now extended over two years. By implication, the quota of skilled foreigners South Africa wished to attract within one year has still not been filled two years later.
- 8.5 Moreover, the total number of work permits approved each year does not resemble the quotas as determined in the notice. The Annual Report of the Department, for instance, indicates that 15 834 work permits were approved in 2000. Three years after that, in terms of the notice, the Ministers of Home Affairs, Labour and Trade and Industry decided that South Africa could benefit from issuing 740 000 quota work permits. From this alone it should be clear that South Africa has a skills shortage.

- 8.6 Combining the Sector Skills Plans submitted by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in 2000 and special research initiatives, the Skills Development Planning Unit of the Department of Labour has identified scarce skills needed in South Africa, which were subsequently approved by Cabinet(15). Among these are those of scientists and researchers, managers, and professional, qualified and experienced technicians such as architects and actuaries. The list was to be used “as a basis for prioritising investment in skills development and implementing the Immigration Act of 2002”. In light of this, a new publication of quotas in the form required by the Immigration Amendment Act is most welcome.
- 8.7 According to a regular report of Statistics South Africa(16), 168 897 overseas travellers visited South Africa in January 2004. Only 2.6% stated their purpose of visit as being work, including contract work. Holidaymakers constituted 91.7%. The number of travellers from mainland Africa was larger; 384 970. However, only 2% declared their migration as work-related and 2.6% stated they were on a business trip. The leading source countries for overseas travellers were the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, France, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy and Canada.

## **9.0 Mitigating the Loss**

- 9.1 During its March 2004 meeting in Addis Ababa, the African Union (AU) developed a Draft Strategic Framework for a Policy on Migration in Africa. On the issue of the brain drain, it noted that the growth and development of industries and service sectors in source countries are hampered by the exodus of highly skilled nationals, harming the economies of these countries. The need to mitigate the effects of the brain drain in African countries is thus a priority policy objective.
- 9.2 The AU’s Framework suggests countering the exodus of skilled nationals by “promoting the Nepad [New Partnership for Africa’s Development] strategy for retention of Africa’s human capacities [and] targeting economic development programmes to provide gainful employment and educational opportunities to qualified nationals in their home countries”. To counter the effects of the brain drain, the Framework suggests “encouraging nationals abroad to contribute to the development of their country of origin through financial and human capital transfers such as short- and long-term return migration, the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology”. The IOM’s Migration in Development for Africa Programme and the activities of the International Labour Organisation and the World Health Organisation are recognised in the Framework as useful tools in countering the effects of skills loss.
- 9.3 Creative marketing is being used to capture expatriate skills. Among the names of apartheid activists and leaders of South Africa’s democracy honoured in President Thabo Mbeki’s 2005 State of the Nation address were two women, Angel Jones and Marina Smithers. For two years these women have been running the Homecoming Revolution, a campaign to bring South African emigrants home and to provide a forum for interaction with South African institutions. During an interview in January 2004, Jones spoke of Nelson Mandela’s speech to expatriates in Trafalgar Square several years before where he expressed his desire to

“put you all in my pocket and take you home”. The many tears these words provoked told her that at least some expatriates were yearning to come home. Given a little incentive, this desire could be converted into action.

- 9.4 The Come Home Campaign, a joint project of the trade union, Solidarity, and the Company for Immigration, has assisted more than 500 returning South Africans in its three years of operation(17). How South Africa is marketed is becoming increasingly important after the first ten years of democracy when some initial severe pessimism is beginning to be proven wrong. The International Marketing Council, which promotes the vision of South Africa as a leading emerging market, offers a “Good News” newsletter detailing South African success stories. As Peter Hain, British Minister for Africa, put it: “This country has so much to offer all of its citizens. More should trumpet the country’s successful transformation from a pariah state to a stable, prosperous democracy, respected globally for its progressive Constitution, its underlying wealth and natural assets and the talent of its people.”
- 9.5 Many SADC sending countries rely on remittances to compensate for the loss of skilled individuals. South Africa is not in a position to do so as it does not experience contract migration outwards. It is felt that remittances in general cannot compensate for the loss of skills as they are not part of a government-to-government programme. They are sent between households and cannot reasonably be regulated. Moreover, remittances are seldom sent through official channels. Particularly in South Africa, with its sophisticated banking system, it is difficult to trace remittances that in many other African countries may be sent through agencies such as Western Union.
- 9.6 Much discussion has focused on some form of compensation for every skilled individual “taken” by another country. In Africa there is a sense of being owed compensation for everything that developed nations have taken out of the continent historically. The difficulty with compensation is that SADC nations, who also attract South Africa’s skilled people, are not in a position to pay and therefore bilateral agreements along these lines are not likely to work.
- 9.7 Perhaps the best method of attracting skilled migrants to supplement the loss of nationals is to develop proactive skills-based immigration policies. Care should be taken, however, that policies do not favour skills from richer, developed nations at the expense of South Africa’s neighbours. Our historic responsibility to the region should not be overlooked. In the long term, development within the region will benefit South Africa in many ways.
- 9.8 Several attempts have been made, particularly in the medical professions, to bond graduates. On the surface it would seem unjust to infringe on the human right to seek a better life and to move freely. Governments should act cautiously when moving in this direction. It would be dangerous to create a sense of being “held back” by one’s own country. Skilled professionals should feel appreciated, supported and encouraged by their home environment if that environment intends to keep them. However, programmes of compulsory community service have been investigated as one way of mitigating the loss of skilled professionals in South Africa. There are arguments against and certainly arguments in favour of, for

instance, having newly qualified doctors serving in rural areas for a specified time before embarking on their own career paths.

- 9.9 Skilled foreigners who come to South Africa should be made to feel welcome. The integration of skilled immigrants is essential if South Africa is to retain them. For this reason, social conditions are as important as economic and political conditions. The Company for Immigration has been assisting the integration of immigrants into South Africa since 1949. Besides helping with documentation, it offers language courses, orientation projects and information and advice on financial matters, medical services, employment and finding accommodation and educational institutions. It links immigrants with cultural, religious and sports organisations to facilitate an easy transition into their new environment.
- 9.10 Such valuable services should not be undermined by xenophobia. Within South Africa's communities, workplaces and even in the government there is an element of distrust or dislike of foreigners that must be challenged. Xenophobia is an exaggerated fear of foreigners, based on perceived differences in culture, language and values. When this difference is seen as threatening or undesirable, xenophobia often finds its expression in acts of discrimination or violence. The underlying attitude that those who are different to us should not become part of us is one that can be changed. South Africa has a unique history in nation-building, having created some degree of unity among a vastly heterogeneous society. Ideas should be concentrated on how to extend that sense of belonging beyond our borders to encompass anyone who is willing to make a positive contribution to South Africa – be that a contribution to our economy, our stability, our international competitiveness or our cultural diversity. Every positive contribution should be valued, regardless of its source. New York, which is a hive of initiative and innovation with a foreign-born population of 36%, is an example that should be considered.
- 9.11 The call for developed nations to assist in capacity-building and the development of African countries was repeatedly made during the 2005 Regional Hearings for Africa of the Global Commission on International Migration. There is a sense that those who have for years been taking from the African continent should now be putting something back in. The question of where development aid could best be deployed was answered by the need for investment in Africa's universities. It makes sense in South Africa that if skilled professionals are being lost, more skilled professionals should be developed. Universities that lose academics to overseas postings often need to pay more to secure a foreign academic to fill the vacant position. Ironically, they are willing to pay more for a foreigner when investing the same amount in a national could have prevented the loss in the first place.

## 10.0 Circulating the Benefits Back Into South Africa

- 10.1 In India, China and Taiwan students study and work abroad and return home temporarily or permanently to make a substantial contribution to their economies. They bring back technology, capital and the cultural and managerial skills of first world economies. This phenomenon is known as brain circulation. The immediate

loss of skills is mitigated to some extent by the return of skilled people with further training. Generally, when migrants intend to return, they retain social and economic ties with their country of origin while they are away.

- 10.2 South Africa could offer incentives to bring skilled expatriates back for a short season to invest their skills and knowledge acquired abroad. Under the right conditions, professors might return to South Africa on sabbatical. It is also possible for the diaspora to contribute to South Africa's development without physically returning. The South African Network of Skills Abroad (Sansa) began as an initiative of the University of Cape Town and later shifted to the National Research Foundation. Sansa tracks emigration of skilled professionals and puts them in contact with local firms and institutions in need of skills. By maintaining interaction between the diaspora and South African institutions, knowledge, ideas, expertise and services can be exchanged.
- 10.3 Bilateral agreements and exchange programmes are central to skills circulation. The British Culture Secretary announced in February 2005 that Britain is offering young South African curators the opportunity to train at its four top museums, after which they will return to South Africa to use their enhanced skills and expertise to advance standards at South Africa's museums in preserving and recording South Africa's heritage. This partnership was developed between the British government and the South African Department of Arts and Culture.
- 10.4 It is still possible that South Africa will see the return of its researchers and developers who have left to work or study abroad. The question is when will they return and what will they bring with them? If they simply return home to retire, they will bring valuable capital but will not make up the deficiency in the labour force. Passively hoping for expatriates to return is not sufficient as a policy approach. South Africa needs to proactively shape the conditions that would attract South Africans back, develop the skills we have and keep our professionals happy at home.

## **11.0 The Government's Response**

### **11.1 Bringing In Skills From Beyond the Borders**

- 11.1.1 The Preamble to the Immigration Amendment Act, signed by the President in October 2004, now includes reference to promoting economic growth "through the employment of needed foreign labour" and by facilitating "the entry of exceptionally skilled or qualified people". The need to increase South Africa's own skilled human resources and promote academic exchanges within the SADC are likewise recognised. These are important additions to the legislation. Much will be determined by the implementing Regulations, which are currently being finalised. There has already been some criticism in the media over conceivable delays when companies wish to bring in skilled employees as a police clearance certificate and South African Qualifications Authority verification are required(18). Concerns were also raised during the public comments process that the application requirements for work and business permits remain onerous and time-consuming, which could act as a deterrent to skills recruitment.

- 11.1.2 The government's commitment to meeting the skills demand is clearly set out in its Programme of Action for the various Government Clusters. The recently updated Programme, including a progress report, refers to the task of finalising "Immigration Regulations to recruit targeted scarce skills in the short term". Although the August 2004 target date for completion was not met, the Amendment Act is ready to come into force as soon as the Regulations are finalised. What is perhaps worrying is the reference to recruiting scarce skills. Trying to ease entry for those who wish to immigrate is quite different from active recruitment abroad.
- 11.1.3 In a welcome move, the National Treasury announced its intention to ease the tax burden on skilled expatriates visiting South Africa(19). The definition of "tax resident" in the Income Tax Act is under review to facilitate extended sojourns in the country. Combined with capital gains tax, taxation based on residence is onerous for visiting expatriates. The possibility of amending the capital gains tax burden is likewise under investigation as it pertains to foreign assets acquired prior to entry into South Africa and to certain foreign assets acquired thereafter. Naturally, if South Africa is to attract its skilled expatriates back, even for a temporary stay during which considerable skills, experience and knowledge may be transferred, the creation of a less burdensome economic climate is essential.
- 11.1.4 Exchanges within the region have met with their own unique obstacles. An agreement between the Departments of Education of Mozambique and South Africa, for instance, whereby Mozambique supplies teachers of mathematics and science and South Africa reciprocates with English teachers, has been hampered by language difficulties.
- 11.1.5 A freer movement of people within the southern African region would facilitate the exchange of skills and the recruitment of skilled workers. The SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons within the region has been under discussion for several years. Imbalances within the region in terms of economic and political stability raised fears that South Africa would bear the brunt of an influx of migrants. This raised security concerns and concerns about how movement could be managed. Effectively, South Africa's government carries the responsibility of maintaining a balance between managing the inflow of skills and developing our existing skills base.

## 11.2 Developing Skills Within South Africa

- 11.2.1 During the 2005 State of the Nation debate, President Mbeki indicated that more needs to be done to raise the skills levels of our people. The National Skills Development Strategy, which has been set in place for 2005 to 2010, will receive R21.9 billion over five years. The focus of the Strategy is improved cooperation between SETAs, the FET colleges and institutions of higher education. The President also emphasised the need to improve skills

development structures in government so as to implement the Human Resources Development Strategy.

- 11.2.2 Within the government's Economic Cluster, ongoing consultation between the Departments of Labour and Education has been targeted in an effort to market learnership programmes more aggressively. The progress report in this regard refers to a framework that has been developed that focuses on scarce skills. SETAs and FET colleges are being encouraged to recruit more school-leavers and graduates to these areas. In this way, the 50 FET colleges currently established throughout South Africa are invaluable to the economy as they provide targeted skills and employment prospects.
- 11.2.3 April 2005 was the target date set for adequate funding of technical colleges and the aligning of courses with the needs of the economy. Particularly among FET colleges, there is an ongoing review of the relevance of educational curricula to the needs of the economy and the need to create an entrepreneurial culture. Funding for FET colleges is generated through partnerships, half of which are with the business and industry sector, notably within the tourism and hospitality industries(20). This substantial investment by businesses is based on FET colleges producing the skills currently in demand in the private sector.
- 11.2.4 During 2006, Employment and Skills Development Agencies are envisaged for completion to reduce the administrative burden on employers and assist Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) to recruit and train learners. Identifying and removing barriers preventing employers from taking on more learners is also being targeted. An attempt is being made to establish a register of all graduates, which the President had singled out for completion by May 2005.
- 11.2.5 The South African government's investment in students in tertiary training institutions, including universities, technikons and nurses and teachers training colleges, is nevertheless not the highest in the SADC region. In fact, according to the Potential Skills Base Survey conducted by SAMP, only 14% of students in South Africa receive government support in the form of bursaries, while its similarly stable and prosperous neighbour, Botswana, boasts 88% of students receiving government support. South African students still rely on a disproportionate degree of personal or family funding compared to the rest of the region. Increased government support for higher education at staff, student and institutional level would be welcomed.
- 11.2.6 During a public consultation in 2003, the then head of the Department of Labour's Skills Development Planning Unit noted South Africa's failure to invest in the professional development of its people. Modern economic investment tends to follow skilled human resources. Therefore, businesses should invest in their employees' development if they wish to attract investment.

### 11.3 Retaining Existing Skills

- 11.3.1 The Economic Cluster has identified the need to increase investment in research and development within the public sector and to expand incentives “(not necessarily financial)” in the private sector to encourage it to follow suit. The progress report in this regard lists the establishment of six new centres of scientific excellence. South Africa’s research field needs strengthening so that more jobs will become available in research. Without the offer of jobs, researchers will naturally leave South Africa.
- 11.3.2 During a media briefing at Parliament in February 2005, the Minister of Public Service and Administration noted that public service professionals must receive more competitive salaries if they are to be retained. The government, she added, wishes to create a “pool of professional skills” within the public service.
- 11.3.3 According to the Programme of Action, a broad framework has been tabled in the Governance and Administration Cluster introducing payment of scarce skills allowances to “identified personnel in selected occupations”. Implementation has commenced in the health sector, which is perhaps the one most visibly affected by emigration. Unfortunately, according to the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (Denosa), doctors have taken the lion’s share of these allowances and only nurses working in oncology, theatre and intensive care units have even qualified. The 2003/2004 “Health Review” says South Africa is short of 52 574 nurses. Each month more than 200 nurses leave South Africa to seek better conditions and better pay elsewhere.
- 11.3.4 It is well known that developed nations engage in active recruitment of qualified medical staff, particularly from English-speaking developing nations. What has been seen over the years as “poaching” of South Africa’s medical personnel by the UK is now being addressed through bilateral agreements. A 2003 Memorandum of Understanding creates opportunities for South African health professionals to work in the UK’s National Health Service for a specified period, whereafter they should return to South Africa with enhanced skills and experience.
- 11.3.5 Recognising that recruitment is often done at the expense of developing countries, the Commonwealth has adopted an International Code of Practice on Ethical Recruitment of Health Workers. South Africa’s Minister of Health last year announced her hopes that this would slow down the migration of health professionals to the UK. A further government-to-government programme is under discussion whereby South Africans living in the UK could be recruited and placed in South Africa.
- 11.3.6 It is regrettable, in light of these initiatives, that the 2005 Budget Debate<sup>(21)</sup> omitted nurses from the salary increase set aside for police, social workers and teachers. Although rebutted by the Minister of Finance, accusations by Denosa that nurses are being left behind in terms of national programmes for skills retention should be given attention. As Denosa points out, during the first decade of democracy, approximately 25 000 nurses requested verification of their qualifications by the South African Nursing Council to enable them to work abroad.

## 12.0 Valuing Human Resources

- 12.1 As the “power house” of the African continent, South Africa is well positioned to pull in skilled Africans who are pushed out of their own environment for a variety of political, economic and developmental reasons. The attitude of some African governments to their skilled workforce does little to encourage patriotism. In an interview with Denis Beckett(22) in the run up to Ghana’s 2004 elections, former Vice President John Atta Mills pointed out that if an expatriate applied for a position in Ghana the application would be weighed against whether there was an applicant available in Ghana to fill the position. By implication, skilled expatriates are not welcomed in their country of origin as a force to boost the economy and national skills base. These skilled expatriates could find a welcome home in South Africa.
- 12.2 South Africa should take care to treat its workforce as a valuable and – to some extent – irreplaceable commodity. As we develop our human resources and improve the environment in which they operate, we could also employ some creative thinking. Bilateral agreements between South Africa and the UK, for example, could require the UK to channel a certain amount of funding into community clinics for each South African nurse it takes. Compensation from developed nations could be balanced with co-operative exchanges in the developing world. In some ways, South Africa has a foot in each door. The challenge is to balance our responsibilities while coaxing out the possibilities.
- 12.3 As South Africa seeks solutions and policy approaches to meet its skills needs, we would do well to remember that our country has the fifth most productive labour force in the world(23). How often is it heard that Britain loves South Africans because they are such hard workers? Yet our own service industry is frequently deplorable. Clearly South Africa’s people have the potential to deliver exceptional quality under the right circumstances. While we develop “the right circumstances” perhaps South Africa should place the high premium on its people that other countries already do.

## 13.0 Policy Recommendations and Further Research

- 13.1 South Africa has a comparative advantage in the world market due to its abundant natural resources. Yet it is essential that we move beyond our dependence on this comparative advantage to properly develop a competitive advantage. To a large extent, our success depends on the capacity and number of our skilled workers. Deficiencies in our ability to produce, retain, employ and attract skilled workers suggest that solutions extend beyond immigration law to include policies on education and labour relations.
- 13.2 As South Africa seeks to retain and attract skills, we must recognise that we are competing for scarce resources. There is a global scarcity of certain skills and globalisation is enabling skilled workers to move more easily as they are sought out by multinationals throughout the world. Supply chains are becoming global, with knowledge workers concentrated around specific locations along the chain.

Advantage may be taken of this fact if South Africa is willing to market itself as a global product supplier. With our excellent harbours and international ports of entry, South Africa is in a good position to capitalise on this. In so doing, we may attract knowledge workers to our shores.

- 13.3 It is important that South Africa maintains a free flow of knowledge, ideas and technology. Having South Africans study abroad need not be considered a loss, provided that they can be brought back to contribute their acquired skills to our economy, labour market and intellectual discourse. Bursary support for foreign study, particularly at post-doctoral level, should be re-established and coupled with bonding requirements. Mobility is essential to acquiring knowledge and the temporary movement of skilled South Africans can provide a great benefit. However, South Africa needs to keep better track of its skilled people abroad and avoid losing them through simple ignorance of their needs, concerns and desires.
- 13.4 The South African diaspora has much to offer. This is a large resource base that can be tapped into to circulate knowledge and ideas. Knowing where its people are and what they are doing, and maintaining a dialogue with them abroad, enables South Africa to hunt for specialised skills when necessary. Taiwan's drive in the 1970s and 1980s to bring its nationals back from the United States to build Taiwan's semiconductor industry is a good example. In seeking to develop a brand for South Africa, we could, for instance, seek out our chemical engineers, nuclear scientists or human geneticists abroad and offer them real incentives to return and drive development in specific fields. It is perhaps not widely known that South Africa has produced four Nobel scientists. These questions remain: do we properly value our highly skilled people; do we facilitate their development; and do we do enough to retain them?
- 13.5 South Africa's education system, having undergone a complete overhaul following 1994, should now focus attention on producing an increasing number of school leavers with the necessary science and mathematics qualifications to proceed to tertiary level science-based careers. The government should further consider free tertiary study to prospective science and mathematics teachers, which could justifiably contain bonding requirements. Until we are able to meet the need for quality, qualified science and mathematics teachers from within our own skills base we cannot be shy to use foreign recruitment.
- 13.6 Likewise the number of researchers South Africa produces, attracts and retains must increase. Steps to be taken in this direction include improving the terms and conditions of service of incumbents at university level, improving the funding for postgraduate study in selected fields and providing state funding for an additional 500 research posts. It should also be acknowledged that there is little reason to have a compulsory retirement age for knowledge workers in general. In the short term, the need for more researchers can be met with a global search campaign.
- 13.7 Globalisation has opened doors for the movement of skilled workers which immigration policy should not, and cannot, close. In an unprecedented way, professionals are able to source information on opportunities abroad and be recruited anywhere in the world. Due to issues of privacy, security and policy it is no easy

task to track the movement patterns of our skilled population. Yet it is a challenge South Africa should rise to if it is to raise its standards of knowledge circulation, skills retention and recruitment, and brand development. How to maintain an ongoing dialogue with our diaspora is thus a field ripe for further investigation.

## References and Resources

- 1 McDonald, D. and Crush, J. 2002. "Thinking about the brain drain in Southern Africa". Published in "Destinations Unknown", Africa Institute of South Africa and Southern African Migration Project.
- 2 Mattes, R. and Richmond, W. 2002. "The brain drain: what do skilled South Africans think?" published in "Destinations Unknown".
- 3 Bailey, A. March 2005. Press statement released by the Come Home Campaign.
- 4 Adepoju, A. September 2004. "Changing configurations of migration in Africa".
- 5 Report on the Potential Skills Base Survey, SAMP. Published in *Crossings*, February 2005.
- 6 Human Sciences Research Council. 1996. "Third International Mathematics and Science Study".
- 7 Human Sciences Research Council. 2004. "Flight of the Flamingos". Prepared for the National Council on Innovation.
- 8 Beine, M., Docquier, F. and Rapoport, H. June 2003. "Brain drain and LDC's growth: winners and losers".
- 9 Blankley, W. August 2003. HSRC. Statement during public consultation of the Immigration Advisory Board: "Brain circulation – a workable answer to brain drain?"
- 10 Human Sciences Research Council. 2004. *op cit.*
- 11 Bloch, A. 2004. "Making it work: refugee employment in the UK". Institute for Public Policy Research, London.
- 12 Beine, M. *et al.* June 2003. *op cit.*
- 13 Ford, R. 8 February 2005. "Low-skilled immigrants to be barred from settling", *The Times*.
- 14 Regulation Gazette No. 7536, Vol. 450. 6 December 2002.
- 15 Department of Labour. "State of Skills in South Africa, 2003".
- 16 Statistical Release P0351. January 2004. "Tourism and Migration", Statistics South Africa.
- 17 Bailey, A. March 2005. *op cit.*
- 18 Lamprecht, L. 1 February 2005. Quoted in "Curbs on immigrants 'will deter investors'", *Business Day*.
- 19 Ensor, L. 24 February 2005. "Relief on the cards for skilled expats", *Business Day*.
- 20 Department of Education. October 2004. "Staffing Survey" among FETs.
- 21 Manuel, T.A. 23 February 2005. Budget Debate in the National Assembly.
- 22 Professor Atta Mills. Interview with Denis Beckett entitled "Uncomfortable questions", 6 August 2004, published on Moneyweb.
- 23 Website of the Homecoming Revolution <http://www.homecomingrevolution.co.za>