# SOUTH AFRICA'S MIGRATION DYNAMICS: FROM SEGREGATION TO INTEGRATION

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Abstract: *Migration is an extremely complex and sensitive concept. The main research purpose is the migration phenomena from the perspective of integration policies adopted by the country of destination concerning the process of cross-border immigration. In this research, we used as a case study the events in South Africa from 2014 until 2019. We chose this country because of its economic development, relative prosperity being one of the main reasons why migrants chose this country. The government is obliged to rethink its policies regarding the status of migrants. Using a qualitative approach, we used four levels of analysis (access to education, labor market, healthcare, political participation) to conduct an exploratory study on how South Africa's government manages the integration policies. Using official documents and media articles we tried to determine the main characteristics of public policies in regards to integration in terms of social, economics, and politics.*

Keywords: *Integration Policies; Immigration; Education; Labor Market; Healthcare; Citizenship; Political Rights; South Africa*

## INTRODUCTION

Immigration, even though an old phenomenon, continues to be perceived as a real catastrophe. The refugee crisis has come to emphasize this negative feeling about migration. However, there are international organizations that deal with migration from both perspectives: positive and negative. For example, the United Nations, through Sustainable Development Goals, believes that migration can help reduce poverty, the fresh workforce has a double impact on both sending countries and destination countries (Hagen-Zanker, Postel, and Vidal 2017, 12-13 ). But, there are some states such as South Africa which are not that keen on immigrants' integration policies.

After 1995, South Africa faced an increasing number of immigrants. Also, this phenomenon coincided with the period when xenophobia was rooted in South African society. However, at first, there was some discursive ambiguity. So, on the one hand, speeches were referring to Pan-African elements, on the other hand increasing the number of those who wanted to restrict the access of immigrants to South Africa (Gordon 2017, 1-2). At present, immigrants from South Africa are making transformations at the societal level. For example, criminality has alarming rates of 34 / 100,000, with many conflicts between natives and foreigners, the number of crimes having xenophobic motivations also is growing (Kollamparambil 2019, 1-2).

Our article aims to analyze how South African authorities integrate immigrants, taking into account the ambitions formulated by the UN within the 2030 Agenda. Our question is whether the Government of South Africa is an element that hampers the integration of immigrants into South Africa?

We believe that immigration policies and legislation in South Africa do not allow migrants to properly integrate into society. To support this argument, we intend to conduct a structured analysis on 4 dimensions: access to education; access to healthcare, access to the labor market; access to citizenship, and political participation. Thus, using a qualitative approach, in the following sections we will analyze the main features of the four dimensions in the idea of creating a clear picture about the integration status of immigrants in South Africa.

## SDGs AND IMMIGRANTS' INTEGRATION

In 2015, the UN adopts the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through which it proposes to alleviate the negative effects of the most pressing problems faced by humanity. The main element of the 2030 Agenda is the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which were created as a way for states to work together to achieve these goals through multi-dimensional strategies. These objectives are also of particular relevance to migration issues as they deal with issues of gender equality, access to education and healthcare, the elimination of social discrepancies (United Nations 2019).

Before starting our analysis, we need a clear delimitation of the concept of integration concerning assimilation and acculturation. There is a whole debate about the differences between assimilation and integration. Assimilation is the process through which immigrants become similar. Assimilation has also positive aspects, for example, acquiring a new language can bring you benefits in the labor market (Brubaker 2001, 541). On the other hand, integration, in the European vision, refers to the development of social cohesion and the preservation of cultural homogeneity, especially the issues related to the mother tongue (Schneider and Crul 2010, 1144). In addition, the concept of integration also involves structural aspects, i.e. it also refers to the inclusion of migrants in the education and health system. Also, structural issues become important

when we aim to measure or analyze the degree of integration of immigrants into a society (Schneider and Crul 2010, 1145). Between the two concepts is the term acculturation, which implies that immigrants take cultural elements from the host state, but they also retain their own identity (Entzinger and Biezeveld 2019, 7-8).

The concept of integration can be structured in several dimensions. The first dimension is an incidence, which can be structured into two subcategories, frequency, and intensity. Frequency refers to the number of ties/contacts that an individual has. A second dimension refers to the identification, thus, the more a person identifies himself with a certain group, the more the individual will feel closer to the members of that group. In addition, there is also a structural dimension that refers to increasing the social participation of the individual in a large group. As far as the cultural dimension is concerned, it refers to aspects that concern the identity and values that individuals share (Entzinger and Biezeveld 2019, 4-7).

## IMMIGRANTS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Immigrants' access to education remains a problem in the current context of integration. United Nations through SDGs prioritizes access to education, including immigrants' access to education systems in destination countries. But in a world where there are over 31 million immigrant children, how can they be integrated? In addition, although immigrant access to education would bring major benefits to the state, it should not be forgotten that large migration flows can some difficulties to this process (Nicolai, Wales, and Aiazzi 2019, 1). Nicolai *et. al.* consider that the challenges that migrants encounter in accessing education can be divided into 3 categories, legal, socio-economic, and linguistic challenges (Nicolai, Wales, and Aiazzi 2019, 10). In addition, two things need to be pointed out when discussing this topic, firstly, the education of migrants-children produces beneficial effects in the long run, secondly, integration policies in the education system must be supported by other policies (Nicolai, Wales, and Aiazzi 2019, 11).

The topic of education can be approached from several perspectives. On the one hand, if we talk about ethnic groups, there are major differences in access to education. For example, in the United States, immigrants from Latin America, because they come from poor families, have lower chances of going to college, unlike Asian immigrants, the latter having families with higher incomes and a different social organization (Baum and Flores 2011, 186-187). On the other hand, the access of migrants to education can also be analyzed from the perspective of supplementary schools. This kind of school is an alternative through which migrants can consolidate their ethnic identity and improve their social capital (Tereshchenko and Grau Cárdenas 2013, 454). In addition to social capital, supplementary schools attract migrants who want to have a broad portfolio of

knowledge and skills, becoming competitive in the labor market (Tereshchenko and Grau Cárdenas 2013, 465).

The case of South Africa is contradictory in terms of migrants' access to education. Thus, the Bill of Rights of 1996 states that access to education must be granted to all, while the Immigration Act of 2002 restricts the right to those who are "illegally foreigners" (SA's Contradictory Laws Discriminate against Children of Migrants 2018). However, this ambiguity can be easily resolved, as the Constitution of South Africa states that access to education must be granted to all. Also, South Africa signed the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which tackles the issue of immigrants' access to education. Currently, as a result of successful lawsuits and decisions taken by the Constitutional Court, immigrants are more likely to have easier access to the education system (#HumanRightsDay: Migrant Children in SA Have Limited Access to Healthcare, Education n.d.).

The problems of South Africa in terms of access to education are known internationally. A 2009 UNICEF report also shows the legislative ambiguities and the fact that many immigrants, due to the difficulties they have in obtaining residence documents, cannot enter the education system. The same report emphasizes the positive aspects of this situation on the entire country. Thus, relaxing the admission procedure for immigrants in the education system would bring an important contribution to the fight against HIV, South Africa having a high percentage of HIV patients (Palmary 2021, 17-20).

## IMMIGRANTS' ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Regarding access to healthcare, some elements can be detached from the literature. First, there is a significant gap between healthcare policies at the local, regional and international levels. This is also due to the lack of clear international standardization on migrant access to healthcare. Secondly, migration and healthcare are in a relationship of interdependence, immigrant access to health services having a positive impact on host states, creating a dynamic and competitive labor market (Tulloch, Machingura, and Melamed 2016, 8-10). The example of Canada can be precious because it shows the degree of interdependence between socio-economic factors and the health level of immigrants. In short, the background and social status of migrants influence their access to healthcare in the destination countries, in addition, the health status of migrants may constitute an important factor based on which they are or not accepted to enter into a particular country (Dunn and Dyck 2000, 1590-1591). Therefore, access to healthcare along with other items such as the education or labor market becomes an important element in measuring the degree of integration of immigrants in a specific area (Ager and Strang 2008, 185).

Taking into account the legislative blurring of the 1996 Constitution, the access of refugees, and generally immigrants to the health system, varies greatly, according to Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp, although immigrants are normally entitled to benefit from emergency medical care, in practice, several documents are required before receiving medical services. There are many cases where immigrants cannot benefit from health care because they do not have all the documentation required by hospitals, and therefore a legislative problem arises because, although the constitution guarantees the migrants right to health care, in practice this is not happening (Alfaro-Velcamp 2017, 53).

The media in South Africa presented in 2014 an incredible case of an Ethiopian child who died because his access to medical care was denied, giving rise to a wave of public opinion xenophobic reactions. The case of the immigrant child from Ethiopia is not unique, this is because of the way the South African authorities attribute the refugee label to almost any immigrant. South African law says that refugees must undertake many steps to benefit from state's protection, which is why they are unable to collect the necessary documents to receive healthcare, although the South African Constitution states "everyone has the right to have access to health care services" (Alfaro-Velcamp 2017, 54).

The South African Constitutional Court does not help too much to improve this situation, the fact that this institution does not make a clear statement in favor of equitable medical assistance to all human beings from South Africa (natives or foreigners) is a strong argument for hospitals and regional authorities to interpret legislation as they want (Alfaro-Velcamp 2017, 55).

Legislative shortcomings also continue in The National Health Act, although this act has a comprehensive approach to the access of the population to health care, in the paragraph stipulating that healthcare should also be provided to vulnerable groups such as children, women, and the elderly, without mentioning refugees or asylum seekers, also, it's the same thing for The Immigration Act (Alfaro-Velcamp 2017, 59). Also, the impact of these legislative issues can be easily noticed through the study conducted in 2012 by African Center for Migration and Society, so, at least 30% of immigrants from major South African cities face many challenges when they want to access the medical system  (Alfaro-Velcamp 2017, 60).

An interesting study is that of Vearey, Modisenyane, and Hunter-Adams (2017, 89-90), who address the issue of how South African authorities offer access to health services for migrants, the authors believing that healthcare accessible to all would have a positive impact on society and the economy of South Africa. Moreover, taking into account that almost all types of migration can be found in South Africa, the authors consider it extremely important for the government to take note of migrant typologies and to create special policies devoted primarily to domestic migrants and also to cross-border migrants (Vearey, Modisenyane, and Hunter-Adams 2017, 93).

## IMMIGRANTS' ACCESS TO THE LABOR MARKET

Access of migrants to the labor market is another factor through which a vision about the degree of integration can be formed. The impact of migrants in the economic sector varies according to the qualifications and social status they have (Portes and Borocz 1989, 606-607). For example, although Denmark had a significant increase in the number of immigrants, the vast majority were refugees, with a lower presence in the labor market in terms of generating economic growth (Liebig 2007, 6). Also, the integration of migrants into the labor market varies according to the generation, thus the second generation of migrants is more likely to find a job (Liebig 2007, 6-7). Moreover, remittances are extremely important, because they have a major role in the economic development of sending countries, thus contributing to the achievement of global poverty reduction (Hagen-Zanker, Postel, and Vidal, 2019, 12-13).

According to statistical data on immigrants' participation in dirty work jobs, it appears that the number of people choosing to work in these sectors is double that of South African nationals, giving rise to a paradox as South Africa is the most prosperous state on the African continent while at the same time there is a significant number of citizens living on the limit of subsistence (Cobbinah and Chinyamurindi 2018, 2).

Analyzing the literature, we observed that two models try to explain the factors underlying immigrants' decision to take part in dirty work: the model of entrepreneurial careers of Dyer and the mode of challenge-based entrepreneurship by Miller and Breton Miller (Cobbinah and Chinyamurindi 2018, 2). On the one hand, Dyer's model refers to certain antecedents that immigrants have before reaching the labor market, on the other, the second model identified in literature states that 4 aspects play a vital role in the choices that immigrants will make about entering the labor market: types of challenges (social, economic, cultural); conditions and experiences, adaptive requirements, outcomes (Cobbinah and Chinyamurindi 2018, 2). In the studies he undertook, Dyer noted that immigrants who had previously experienced poverty and family problems tended to have an impulsive attitude and isolation, which turned into adaptability issues (Cobbinah and Chinyamurindi 2018, 2).

A very interesting study is that of Cobbinah and Chinyamurindi (2018), the two authors discussed with 30 immigrants from South Africa, trying to determine the factors behind their insertion into the dirty-work jobs. The results of this study revealed some extremely precious aspects of the motivation behind migration, as well as the elements that led the interviewed people to end up doing dirty work (Cobbinah and Chinyamurindi 2018, 4). From the point of view of the motivation to emigrate, respondents said that the socio-economic factors underpin the decision to go to another country, the most common problems being poverty and family problems. Also, those who participated in this study say that the lack of concrete employment opportunities in the country of origin and the desire to experience new things

contributed to the decision to emigrate (Cobbinah and Chinyamurindi 2018, 4-5). As for the factors that compelled immigrants to choose dirty work, the main reasons are related to South African legislation regarding the acts that an immigrant must have to get a job in the formal sector, these issues creating a vicious circle because once getting into the dirty work sector, immigrants begin to have low self-esteem (Cobbinah and Chinyamurindi 2018, 5-6).

Statistical data presents an extremely interesting aspect for the phenomenon of immigration, so in 2009, the Human Development Report states that most of the migration is happening among states with an average level of development, despite the tendency to think that migrants leave from the poorest countries to the richest, therefore Nzinga Broussard's approach is extremely useful as it aims to analyze whether the impact of immigrants on the labor market in middle-developed countries like South Africa is the same as the impact that immigrants have it on the labor market in a developed country (Broussard 2017, 389-391).

Using the data from 3 censuses, Broussard concludes that immigrant insertion in the South African labor market leads to a decrease of native-black employability, which has the same effect in the case of annual incomes of native-black citizens employed in the formal sector. However, following the statistical processing, the author can not accurately show the impact of immigrants on native-black employability in the informal sector, but it can be said that "immigration causes an intersectoral employment shift" (Broussard 2017, 417). Also, Broussard (2017, 418) notes that immigration affects women and native men in South Africa differently, so although income is affected similarly in terms of employability, women are twice as affected as men, moreover, it is necessary to note that native-black women tend to shift to formal to informal sector jobs, the general conclusion of the author is that the authorities of South Africa do not adequately protect native-black from the negative effects that immigration has on the labor market, especially on the formal sector.

## IMMIGRANTS' CITIZENSHIP, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The debate on the relationship between immigrants and the concept of citizenship has evolved steeply over the past decades, so, two approaches emerged. The first refers to the rights and obligations that a migrant has concerning the sending country. The second deals with the modalities and policies by which a migrant can obtain citizenship of the destination state. In short, the notion of citizenship can be defined as "belonging to a socio-cultural community" and can be analyzed through 4 dimensions: legal status, rights, participation, identity (Bloemraad 2000, 9-10).

Literature also shows that the traditional model of citizenship concerning the nation-state has changed and gained new dimensions. Thus, immigrants become

connected with both sending and receiving countries as well as with various types of international forums. Therefore, we can discuss the emergence of new concepts such as multicultural identities or transnational participation (Bloemraad 2000, 30). In addition, although we are tempted to believe that the link between citizenship and the nation-state becomes irrelevant, there remain certain areas where this relationship continues to be a strong one. For example, when we talk about granting political rights or naturalizing an immigrant, the state still plays an important role (Bloemraad 2000, 31). Speaking strictly about the political participation of immigrants, a clear distinction should be made between the actors involved (state/non-state). Furthermore, we need to realize that this type of participation can have several dimensions (civic participation, social interaction, etc.) (Zapata-Barrero *et al.* 2014, 24).

Migrants encounter numerous difficulties in access to citizenship or involvement in society. Laws from South Africa restrict citizenship, for example, refugees can become citizens only 10 years after receiving refugee status (South African Government 2019). Lack of citizenship makes difficult access to other public services such as education or healthcare. Moreover, South African authorities do not seem to be willing to resolve these issues. The recent electoral campaign (2019) has shown that the big political parties have profoundly xenophobic discourse and do not want to solve the problems of immigrants, on the contrary, politicians want to restrict the access of other migrants to South Africa. Xenophobia is also present in society. In a recent interview, a South African businessman born in Somalia said that the South African society still perceives him as a foreigner even though he lives in Johannesburg since 2001 (Tamerra Griffin, 2019). However, ironically, there are small extremist political parties that fight against discrimination of immigrants, for example, the Economic Freedom Fighter Party (far-left) (EFF 2019 Election Manifesto, 52).

## CONCLUSION

Integration of migrants concerning SDGs works through the UN 2030 Agenda. Thus, some specialists argue that implementing appropriate policies for immigrant integration can benefit both sending and destination countries. However, before starting an analysis of integration, the concept needs to be carefully delimited. Thus, we have assimilation, a concept that implies the incorporation of culture by other cultures, while acculturation presupposes taking certain elements and preserving the cultural identity. Integration is somewhere in the middle, this concept presupposes 'becoming similar but not identical', trying to preserve the cultural homogeneity of the population which is the target of integration.

Using the 4 dimensions (access to education, healthcare, labor market, citizenship, and political participation) we have seen many issues that make difficult the integration of immigrants in South Africa. The main element that limits the integration

process is access to citizenship. South African legislation proposes very stringent conditions for immigrants who want to become citizens, for example, refugees only after 10 years have the right to apply for citizenship. Lack of citizenship affects immigrants' access to healthcare and the labor market, so these people are gradually isolated by authorities. Therefore, a vicious circle is created. Without education, they cannot have an adequate job, without an adequate job they do not have the financial resources to access other services like healthcare.

The South African state does not directly affirm its desire to change the situation of immigrants. Election campaigns are a good time for major political parties to use populist speeches using the high level of xenophobia of the South African society to get political advantages. Thus, we can conclude that the political factor is one of the main obstacles to the development of the integration process of immigrants.

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