



Please cite the source as:

González Barea, E. M. (2008). A student migratory process (pre-migration, migration and post-migration): Moroccan youngsters in the University of Granada. *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa*, 10 (2). Retrieved month day, year, from: <http://redie.uabc.mx/vol10no1/contents-gonzalezbarea.html>

Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa

Vol. 10, No. 2, 2008

A Student Migratory Process (Pre-Migration, Migration and Post-Migration): Moroccan Youngsters in the University of Granada

Un proceso migratorio (pre-migración, migración y post-migración) estudiantil: jóvenes marroquíes en la Universidad de Granada

Eva María González Barea
Evamgon@um.es

Departamento de Didáctica y Organización Escolar
Facultad de Educación
Universidad de Murcia

Campus Universitario de Espinardo, 30100
Espinardo, Murcia, España

(Received: January 30, 2006; accepted for publishing: May 2, 2008)

Abstract

In this article we analyze a particularly migratory process and, at the same time, we include a new and not studied notion of migration. It consists of the displacement of students of different regions of Morocco to continue their academic studies in a foreign university, in this case, the University of Granada. We present the study as a new research topic, due to the practical inexistence of bibliography or studies in this matter. At the same time, we present it as the analysis of a new migratory process that we necessarily have to include in the global phenomenon of actual migrations. We also include the theoretical analysis that stands for the development of this study.

Key words: Immigration, college students, foreign students, Morocco, Spain.

Resumen

En este artículo se analiza un proceso migratorio particular al mismo tiempo que se incluye una novedosa y poco estudiada noción de migración. Este proceso consiste en el desplazamiento de los estudiantes procedentes de distintas regiones de Marruecos para realizar su formación académica en una universidad extranjera, la Universidad de Granada. Este estudio se presenta como nuevo en el ámbito de la investigación, debido sobre todo a la práctica inexistencia de bibliografía y de estudios realizados sobre la temática tratada. Al mismo tiempo, se presenta como el análisis de un nuevo tipo de proceso migratorio que, a pesar de sus particularidades, es preciso incluir dentro del fenómeno global de las migraciones contemporáneas.

Palabras clave: Educación superior, Africa, migración estudiantes, España, Comunidad Europea.

Introduction

This report is part of the study area of migrations and intercultural relations (Gonzalez Barea, 2007), which consists of descriptive and ethnographic research on the migration of Moroccan students who temporarily leave their cities of origin to study at the University of Granada, Spain.

In studying the migration process of the Moroccan students at the University of Granada, three phases were distinguished: first, *the pre-migration stage*, which refers to decision-making on the part of young Moroccans to emigrate for the purpose of pursuing their studies at the University of Granada; second, *the migratory stage*, which includes the intercultural experiences of the Moroccan in the receiver society; and third, *the post-migration stage*, referring to the students' future project after completing their studies in Granada. Despite the supposed linear timing of these stages, they form a circular and cyclical migration process.

The first section defines the concept of migration; the second includes some methodological notes that explain the process of investigation developed; the third

refers to the different phases analyzed in the migration process studied; and the last presents some conclusions.

I. Conceptual Framework

Although population movements are a constant and a characteristic of humanity throughout history, there is a need today to define and delimit the concept of migration, and even more, to reach an agreement between the specialists in this field, about who can be considered a migrant, or under what conditions.

Some results of research on migration (White, 2000) show discrepancies as to whether those students who travel to another country to study should be considered migrants, and as a result, there are also questions about including the study of their movement as an integral part of the migration environment. However, in view of the different dimensions included in the definitions of migration (Courgeau, 1988; Jackson 1986; Checa y Arjona, 1999), the study of the student process of the Moroccans is considered to be a migration process with particular characteristics and needs that differ from other migratory movements. The dimensions referred to in this study are the variables of space, time and social class. In the case of these Moroccan students and their migration process, each dimension shows a variation, also present in other types of movements unquestionably classified as migratory, especially those concerning the movement of migrant workers.

The group of Moroccan students receiving their training in Spain experience, during their migration, a change in their geographic space for a prolonged period, which although primarily determined by the duration of the university studies they choose, also includes a socio-cultural change, in that the students leave their home country, Morocco, to live in a receiver country, Spain. Assuming that the existence of these three variables or dimensions is essential in order for a population movement to be considered migration, then the movement in which these Moroccan individuals are the protagonists is indisputably migratory.

At the same time, student mobility constitutes a potential migration of skilled workers, facilitated in turn by the development of communications and the rapid circulation of information. Global commercial integration enables the mobility of the students and allows them to share in cultural and social practices in the host country, so that later they are in condition to play a role as "ambassadors" in both countries, the host country and the country of origin.

What was once called *brain drain*, usually within the context of the Cold War, is today configured as a broad movement of human capital transcending national frontiers.

Qualified migration is understood, in various studies, as that which comes from the *First World* (Blanco, 2000). Such a concept, as well as being simplistic, presents a skewed reality, since it presents the immigrant community as proceeding from

countries of the *Third World* or countries on the way to development, as a community lacking training—and that is not the truth of the matter. In this way, it is obvious that on the one hand, there are those who choose Spain as a destination country in which to further the training begun at home, and on the other hand, there is the emission of qualified individuals with academic training who leave their country in search of employment opportunities different from those offered in their country of origin.

II. Methodology

This report is an ethnographic study, if we understand ethnography as “the descriptive study of the culture of a community, or of some of its fundamental aspects, under the perspective of a global understanding of the same” (Aguirre Baztan, 1995, p. 3).

At the same time, the study of this student community that comes from various regions of Morocco, lies within a qualitative methodology, which according to Erickson (1986), describes key incidents in descriptive, functionally relevant terms, and situates them in a particular relationship to the broadest social context.

Through field work for this investigation there was established a direct relationship with the study group, since social interaction with the subjects as an object of study was considered fundamental for understanding the meaning of some of their actions, conversations and expectations, “although that meaning may or may not be common to all the agents of the group” (Velasco y Diaz de Rada, 1997, p. 104).

Interest in the social meanings and insistence that these can be considered only in the context of the interaction between individuals, are the factors that characterize the qualitative paradigm (Anguera, 1995), which includes the criteria used in the methodological process of this ethnographic investigation.

The field work was a process of compiling data to be used in further analysis and presentation, and took place during a period that included travel to Morocco for the purpose of getting acquainted with cultural and social aspects of the country in situ.

In addition, Moroccan students at the University of Granada were interviewed, and Moroccan organizations/associations in Granada were visited. The type of interview used is formally defined as semi-structured; it makes use of a script which brings together, in a broad way, all the themes to be treated in its development. “The interview is a technique of qualitative methodology, which is used for obtaining verbal information from one or several subjects using a questionnaire or script ” (Aguirre Cauhe, 1995, p.172).

The script used for the interview includes three blocks of themes, which can be located on a time continuum:

- *Before leaving Morocco:* offers information about the training received by the Moroccan students in their country of origin, as well as the factors that led to the decision to pursue their studies at the University of Granada.
- *Stay in Granada:* means the migratory process of the students, as regarding their experience after moving to the city.
- *Future perspective:* the Moroccan students' projects for the future, which can include staying in Spain or returning to their country of origin after completing their training in Granada.

Each block also includes questions divided into three thematic sections: *education, family, and social relationships* (see Annex I).

Analysis of the collected information was accomplished by using discourse analysis; this, according to Krippendorf (1997), is defined as a research technique used to “formulate, based on certain data, reproducible and valid inferences which can be applied to a context” (p. 28). The analysis was done in the following order:

- 1) Transcription of the information compiled through interviewing Moroccan students in the city of Granada.
- 2) Codification of the thematic units which researchers wanted to analyze later, following the script of the interviews.
- 3) Organization and writing up of the results.
- 4) Presentation of the results, which refers to the analysis of the compiled information.
- 5) Presentation of the results and conclusions, which offers a diachronic and synchronic vision of the student migratory process analyzed in this study.

III. Results

According to the first study done by Lopez Garcia (1999), 49.6% out of the 73.4% of Moroccan students in Andalusia, live in the city of Granada. The last data offered by the Association of Moroccan Students (AEM) (2005), indicate that there are approximately 3,300 Moroccan students in Spain, of whom 2,100 live in Granada; this is 60% of the total in the state. These figures show a new academic and sociocultural reality in the university, characterized by its dynamic of growth; The Moroccans constitute the largest colony of foreign students in this university.

3.1 The pre-migratory stage. Factors influential in choosing the University of Granada

The existence of a shared history between Morocco and Spain has facilitated institutional cooperation in education between the two countries, and has influenced the decision of the Moroccan students to pursue their studies in Spain. Within this contextual framework, there are socio-familial networks which explain the family connection between the two countries. As well, entrance requirements are now stricter for the various French universities which used to be the destination

of many students from the old French colony in Morocco; furthermore, there is a crisis facing the Moroccan manufacturing system (Gonzalez Barea, 2001).

Regarding institutional cooperation between Moroccan universities and the University of Granada, there are numerous agreements and accords which show the both parties' commitment to cooperation and collaboration in education. In Morocco there are Spanish high schools directly associated with the University of Granada.

The migratory concentration in this university can also be explained, as can other migratory phenomena, by the existence of familial and social networks that shape and support this process. These networks link the migratory community in the place of destination with the non-migratory community in the place of origin (Gurak y Caces, 1998). In the case of the Moroccan students, the system of migratory networks is developed from the beginning of the migratory process, from the moment the students decide to continue their studies in Spain. These networks materialize, in part, in the institutional-level contacts that facilitate the process of university registration, and also, in a group of social networks made up of relatives, acquaintances, and other Moroccan students and former students of the University of Granada. Therefore, the existence of social networks is linked to the migratory process of Moroccan students, as reflected in the following testimony of a young Tetuaní student at the University of Granada:

I had family here, at the time when I was in high school, and they said that the University of Granada is famous and you can study what you want...and my friends as well...(interview with a student from Tetuan, 1999).

3.2 The migratory stage. Intra- and intercultural relationships in the context of reception

There are several outstanding aspects of Moroccan students' migratory stage. These originate in the process of meeting the host society and adapting to it. These factors have to do with the intra- and intercultural experience of the collective during their studies at the University of Granada. The first is the ethno-regional issue, particularly the Arab-Berber distinction.

This ethnic, cultural and regional differentiation, present in the interior of Morocco and among the migrants, at least for a significant part of the student community, becomes a source of identity revindication. It is reflected, for example, in the environment of associations, and of non-governmental organizations like the Amazigh Association, formed to promote and transmit an acquaintance with the Berber culture, both in Morocco and abroad.

Another crucial question resides in gender difference and its influence on the students' migratory process. Since this begins with the configuration of social relations as based on rigid gender roles set in the country of origin, it must be understood that it will also play a determining role in migration. Often, from the perspective of men, and of some women, women are accused of appropriating a

"liberty" that did not originally belong to them—although it probably has more to do with molding themselves to the new social conditions and the new reality in which the community finds itself immersed. The data given also illustrate the way in which for many Moroccan girls, the migratory stage is a “breathing space” away from the socio-familial control exercised in their home environment. The contrast lived by many of the female interviewees between the rigid control they experience in their home environment and the liberty they temporarily acquire in Granada, is resolved in various ways. While some students develop an intercultural strategy of double standards, which permits them to move back and forth with ease between the contradictory norms of the two social situations, others, conscious of the temporary character of the migrant/student stage, decide rather to shut themselves inside the Moroccan community, whose social control acts as a substitute for the absent family and parental control. In this way, these young women avoid direct interaction with the norms and gender roles prevalent in the host society.

It has been shown that the gender issue is closely and ultimately linked with religion, and particularly with carrying out religious practices during the migration. In this sense, there is no change in the concept of religion when in contact with the receiver society, mostly non-Muslim. Any changes are limited to the area in which religious practices are carried out, and the principal changes involve the hours for daily prayers. Nevertheless, there are cases in which there is an almost-total abandonment of the religious practices after a time, although this never occurs during the month of fasting (Ramadan.) The majority of the students comply with this practice in spite of its difficulties, as indicated by a young man from Larache in his third semester at the University of Granada:

Yes, Ramadan is the most difficult because there, for example...at six it is adapted...they opened the library at night...they closed at six, and didn't open until eight...so it was twelve before you could go to eat, but the schedule is what is hardest here about practicing Ramadan (interview with a student from Larache, 2000).

3.3 The post-migratory stage. Majors chosen and views on returning to the country of origin

The prevailing view on going back to Morocco, in much of the Moroccan student group from the time they begin studying in Granada, explains their choices of majors. A high percentage of these students choose to pursue degrees in pharmacy, medicine, translation or interpretation, or literature—also architecture and computing. The School of Pharmacy plays a key role; 50% of all the Moroccans enrolled study there. Of the approximately 2000 students who attend this school, some 600 are Moroccan, according to AEM (205). After pharmacy, the choice of the Moroccan students is advanced engineering (144 students distributed among Granada, Valencia and Madrid); degrees in science (118 individuals in Granada and Barcelona); and medicine (97, over half of them in Granada) (Lopez Garcia, 1999).

It is also noteworthy that of the Moroccan students who prepare for the University of Granada entrance exams in private schools (27% of those who live in this city) (Lopez Garcia, 1999), not many choose classic majors focusing on a job in the public sector: law, political science, business science, or teaching.

As for returning to Morocco (Gonzalez Barea, 2005), there are certain factors that make it less sure, less definite than it used to be, and that, therefore, may indicate a new phase of migration, or of staying in Spain for other reasons, not necessarily academic. The main factors stemming from various biographical reasons are: the level of success in university studies, the level of integration into the everyday life of the host society, a lasting professional insertion into the Spanish labor market due to systems of relationships developed in the host society; and a relationship established with a significant other in Spain.

Besides the issue of professionalism and professional insertion, in the case of graduates of the University of Granada, there is another important variable: the application of what the individual has studied once she/he works professionally, and in this sense, the incorporation of innovations learned in the migratory training experience. Throughout their training in the university, there are many instances in which Moroccan students reflect on the possible changes they might promote in the Moroccan system, once this stage has been completed. So said a student from the city of Nador who received his doctorate in geology from the University of Granada:

I always thought after seeing here how the students are treated and all that...well, because I could take it another way. I have also had the opportunity to handle many kinds of apparatus...and then there are schools now that have devices but not everybody can use them. In that sense I would love to go back to Morocco, because let me tell you, you can make a difference, treat students a different way from the way you were treated...give the classes another way...give more practice than theory, make things better, apply something good that you've learned here (interview with a student from Al-Hoceima, 2000).

So once the Moroccan youth join the labor force in Morocco—depending on which disciplines—the innovations developed within each sector are, in many cases, quite visible. However, despite the academic knowledge that the Moroccans can transmit through their work, there is a huge disadvantage in terms of technical and developmental resources. This limits their ability to apply their knowledge and innovation, and hampers the development and modernization that, through this student migration, could be incorporated into Morocco's structural functioning.

IV. Conclusion

International migration is viewed as a social phenomenon that causes the appearance of new, qualitative social realities, beyond those usually rooted in the region of arrival and destination. Thus, it requires the adoption of theories and

concepts from different disciplines—agreements with the new migratory realities that permit learning about contemporary migration phenomena in a global fashion.

The displacement of Moroccan young people toward foreign countries with the objective of getting university training in line with their interests, answers to a movement that could be called *brain circulation*, since it involves a cyclical and temporal migratory process.

This ethnographic investigation has analyzed the community of Moroccan students and their migratory process from the perspective of migration studies, a perspective often limited to strictly occupational migration processes—the immigration of the *work force*—or the forcibly displaced—refugees.

Moreover, this study and its results promote a rethinking of certain measures that should be considered in the context of immigration policies drawn up in both the country of emission and the country of reception:

It is essential that the administrative bureaucracy necessary for the legal stay of Moroccan students in Spain work in harmony with the reality that they live, so as to minimize the current problems of this community of students. One example is the question of the timing of academic matriculation and the delay in obtaining a visa that allows entry to Spain; or the difficulty these individuals encounter in returning to Morocco in the desired time, due to the long delay requiring renewal of the student card. It necessitates seeing migration not only from a technical point of view, to "control the borders" in answer to the demands of the host societies, but in a manner total and complete.

On the other hand, it would be necessary to give the migratory collective instruments that would facilitate both their integration in the host countries and their relationship with the contexts of departure. In the case of Moroccan students, both the educational and political institutions of the original context and of the host country need to rethink their situation.

This study reflects the need to broaden perspectives in analyzing the realities of migration. It is a first attempt to alleviate this need, which leads to new areas of study and analysis that will go deeper into the reality of the Moroccan students' community and their migration processes.

Referencias

Aguirre Baztán, A. (1995). Etnografía. In A. Aguirre Baztán (Ed.), *Etnografía. Metodología cualitativa en la investigación sociocultural* (pp. 3-20). Barcelona: Marcombo.

Aguirre Cauhé, S. (1995). Entrevistas y cuestionarios. In A. Aguirre Baztán (Ed.), *Etnografía. Metodología cualitativa en la investigación sociocultural* (pp. 171-180). Barcelona: Marcombo.

Anguera, M. T. (1995). La observación participante. In A. Aguirre Baztán (Ed.), *Etnografía. Metodología cualitativa en la investigación sociocultural* (pp. 73-83). Barcelona: Marcombo.

Asociación de Estudiantes Marroquíes (2005). Retrieved February 20, 2005, from: <http://aem.iespana.es/aem/>

Blanco, C. (2000). *Las migraciones contemporáneas*. Madrid: Alianza.

Checa, J. C. & Arjona, A. (1999). Los estudios sobre migraciones en España. Una aproximación. In F. Checa & E. Soriano (Eds.), *Inmigrantes entre nosotros. Trabajo, cultura y educación intercultural* (pp. 33-64). Barcelona: Icaria.

Courgeau, D. (1988). *Methods de mesure de la mobilité spatiale*. París: Institute National d'Etudes Demographiques.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 119-161). New York: McMillan.

González Barea, E. M. (2001). ¿Multiculturalizando la Universidad? La Universidad de Granada, un destino prioritario para los estudiantes marroquíes. In J. De Prado (Coord.), *Diversidad cultural, identidad y ciudadanía* (pp. 83-95). Córdoba, Argentina: Sociedad de Estudios Transnacionales.

González Barea, E. M. (2005). Un proceso migratorio transnacional. De estudiantes marroquíes en España a profesionales en Marruecos. Inserción social, laboral y familiar en el país de origen tras la migración. *Revista Digital del Foro de Investigación sobre el Mundo Árabe y Musulmán (FIMAM)*. Retrieved June 7, 2006, from: <http://www.fimam.org/d.htm>

González Barea, E. M. (2007). *Estudiantes marroquíes en España. Educación universitaria y migraciones*. Sevilla: Doble J.

Gurak, D. & Caces, F. (1998). Redes migratorios y la formación de sistemas de migración. In G. Malgesini (Comp.), *Cruzando fronteras. Migraciones en el Sistema Mundial* (pp. 75-110). Barcelona: Icaria.

Jackson, J. A. (1986). *Migration*. New York: Longman.

Krippendorff, K. (1997). *Metodología de análisis de contenido. Teoría y Práctica*. Barcelona: Paidós.

López García, B. (1999). El intercambio universitario entre Marruecos y España: los estudiantes marroquíes en España. *Awraq*, 20, 233-267.

Velasco, H. & Díaz de Rada, A. (1997). *La lógica de la investigación etnográfica. Un modelo de trabajo para etnógrafos de la escuela*. Madrid: Trotta.

Annex 1. Script for interview

1. About Morocco

A. Education

- Studies in Morocco, and why you chose those studies.
- Location and characteristics of the school and the city where you studied
- Relationship with your classmates and teachers.
- Your family's opinion about this.

B. Family

- City where you were born, and its characteristics.
- What is life like in that city? What do you like, and what do you not like about that city? What would you change?
- What are the people of that city like?
- Compare it with other Moroccan cities.
- Profession of your parents and siblings.
- Family life: How do you feel about your family, and about being together with them? How is religion practiced in your home?

C. Social relationships

- Free-time activities.
- Practice of religion.
- Personal opinion of Morocco/Spain (previous visits).

2. About Granada

A. Trip to Granada

- Decision to emigrate/ why.
- How you came to Granada.
- What you thought about during the trip.
- First impression of the city and its people/ how you felt when you first got to Spain.

-Looking for a place to live / housemates.

-First days in Granada.

B. Education

-Choice of courses to study in Granada / school where you study (opinion).

-Relationship with classmates and teachers.

-Why this city?

-Requirements for entering Spain and the school.

-Work done in Granada.

C. Family

-Contact with your family since you have been in Granada.

-Visits home / what you do when you go home.

-Your family's opinion about your studies and your stay in Granada/ the support you receive.

D. Social relationships

-Free-time activities.

-Opinion about the lifestyle in Granada/ opinion before you came to Granada.

-How does the lifestyle here differ from that in Morocco?

-Opinion about your classmates: Moroccan and non-Moroccan (also before you come to Granada).

-Practice of your religion in Granada/ difficulties you ran into.

3. Plans for the future

-Opinion about the job market in Morocco.

-Opinion about the job market in Spain.

-Advice to Moroccans who want to study in Spain.