

New Migrations from Galicia to Germany: Educational Profiles and Social Networks

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Introduction

In recent years of the new millennium the media have spread several reports on the current migration of Spanish youth. Among them and to cite only a few examples for illustrative purposes we find the following headlines: «Qualified Spanish immigration increases in Germany» (*ABC*, 27th November, 2012); «Iciar Bollaín portrays the disappointment and nostalgia of Spanish emigrants» (*El País*, 31st October, 2014); «Millennial Generation: 83% of young people believe they will have to emigrate to work» (*El Correo Gallego*, 17th April, 2015); «A total of 36,511 Spaniards emigrated to Germany in 2013, according to the Federal Bureau of Statistics» (*España Exterior*, 27th May, 2014); «The loss of 25% of young people aggravates the economic impact of aging in Galicia» (*Faro de Vigo*, 16th November, 2014); «Galician scientists concerned about the brain drain because of the recession» (*Faro de Vigo*, 1st August, 2012), «More than 30,000 people emigrated to other countries or communities in 2014» (*La Voz de Galicia*, 16th June, 2015), «Germany benefits from immigration»

(*Deutsche Welle*, 2014); «The number of Galicians who emigrate to other countries decreases, but those who move to other parts of Spain increase» (*La Voz de Galicia*, 15th June, 2015); «About 45% of Pontevedran citizens who choose to emigrate abroad are younger than 30 years old» (*Faro de Vigo*, 1st August, 2015); «Before, we exported unskilled labour; now, talent» (*La Voz de Galicia*, 23rd August, 2016).

In addition to this summary of current news items, reference should be made to some of the authors who have worked the most in the field of emigration such as Xosé Manuel Beiras Torrado, Antonio Eiras Roel, Julio Hernández Borge, Xosé Manuel Núñez Seixas, Vicente Peña Saavedra and Ramón Villares Paz, of whom we will indicate some important works in the following section.

This media landscape reflects, to some extent, social concern about the phenomenon of emigration which has led to a debate about the quantification of the number of emigrants leaving Spain. In fact, there is no source that can identify relatively accurately the exact number of people who have left. And that is why

the research presented herein is more of a descriptive and qualitative analysis of a sample of emigrants from Galicia to Germany and their academic profiles, rather than a study with ambitions of completeness and representativeness surrounding the current Galician emigration into German territory.

This communication is the result of the research conducted in the year 2014-2015 titled: *Approaching the emigration process of Galician youth in Germany at present: educational profile, employment and expectations*¹.

Why did we decide to do research on this issue?

The main reasons that have led us to this work have been personal, social and scientific. First, since childhood we have heard numerous anecdotes from endless stories referring to Germany that a person of our family who immigrated in the 60s to a town near Frankfurt, always told us anecdotes. (Anecdotes about German transport, recycling bottles, culture, agriculture, pollution, etc.. Following this flow of memories, our being able to visit Germany and see if what is known as the 'economic locomotive of Europe' was really the same country that was set in our imagination through the information made available to us and the news we saw or read in the media, would become, years later, the birth seed of this research.

Secondly, emigration is a systemic phenomenon that is a substantial part of the history of Galicia. And although current emigration flows show marked differences from the profiles exhibited at other times (19th and 20th centuries), its survival and revival in Galicia today is a relevant factor affecting one way or

another each of the areas of the social fabric of the community. Therefore, we must bear emigration in mind as a component of marked influence on the future of Galician reality, since its impact, immediate and delayed, has left, and continues to leave, a huge imprint on the fabric of the country, as both classic and recent studies on the subject testify.

In this regard, some publications of outstanding importance on the study of emigration must be cited in chronological order, such as those made by Xosé Manuel Beiras Torrado (*Structure and problems of the Galician population* [1970], *The economic backwardness of Galicia*, [1972]); the work of professor Julio Hernández Borge (*Galician emigration to Europe from 1961 to 1975* [1976] and *Past and present of Galician emigration in Europe* [2007]), publications of professor Vicente Peña Saavedra (*Exodus, community organization and school intervention: educational imprint of transoceanic emigration in Galicia* [1991]; *Galicia-America: historical relations and future challenges* [1993]); the work of Antonio Eiras Roel (*Contributions to the study of Galician emigration, a regional approach* [1992]; the work of Carlos Sixirei Paredes (*Emigration* [1995]), the research of Professor Ramón Villares Paz (*History of Galician emigration to America* [1996]), and the work of professor Xosé Manuel Núñez Seixas (*Transoceanic return emigration and social change in the Iberian Peninsula: some theoretical observations in a comparative perspective* [2001]). And some recent news about current emigration, including: «Spaniards are migrants again» (UNRIC, 2016); «Almost 100,000 Spaniards left the country in

2015, the highest figure since the beginning of the recession» (*La Voz de Galicia*, 30th June, 2016); «Almost 100,000 Spaniards emigrated in 2015, the highest figure since the financial crisis» (*El País*, 30th June, 2016).

Thirdly, at present, the research that is being done on emigration from within the field of education is still scarce and we consider it necessary to document and visualize more transparently and deeply what is happening with this phenomenon from a pedagogical perspective. We believe that together with the subject dealt with from the sociological, economic, political, historical or demographic areas, it is essential to examine it from its educational aspect, since there are several implications involved in this domain.

Features of the Paper: Research Problem, Objectives, Methodology, Results, Conclusions.

Having presented the reasons that prompted us to do this research, we now elaborate on the characteristics of the work described. The basis of inquiry that we considered was expressed in these terms: Have the most qualified and best trained (young) people from Galicia been emigrating in recent years? In relation thereto, the overall objective we set out was formalized in these terms: analyse the current emigration of Galician youth to Germany, while trying to focus mainly on their educational profile and type of employment done in the host country, in order to verify whether the phenomenon of brain drain, which the media talks much about, corresponds or not to the reality of those who have left.

In addition to this overall objective, we have formulated several specific objectives from which we highlight here those which are most relevant to the educational profile targets, self-perception, relationships and participation in social networks, and expectations of emigrated Galicians. They are the following:

- Identify and get to know the educational profile (academic studies and training) of Galician emigrant youth to Germany in recent years.

- Establish close contact with the object emigrant study group to collect information on their self-perception (feelings, emotions and opinions) regarding their emigration experience.

- Inquire into the main expectations and social relationships of the group of young emigrants from Galicia in Germany today.

The methodology used was of a mixed nature, both qualitative and quantitative. The first methodology allowed us to have closer and more detailed contact with the population studied and the information it provided. The second provided for the numerical treatment of much of the data collected directly from our informants.

The population under study was intentionally selected given they had the following characteristics:

- Young Galicians born in Galicia.
- Aged between eighteen and forty-one years old.
- Emigrated since 2007.
- Country of destination of their emigration project: Germany.

The initial size of the population with which we established contact totalled

77 people. After a review, and given that some of the selected people did not strictly comply with the requirements, this number was reduced to 69 people. Of this group, a total of 34 people were eventually involved.

How did we establish the approach and contact with the population?

The main strategies and tools used to contact Galician emigrants were the use of the Internet and, more specifically, the social network Facebook. In this network we created our own profile to carry out the research. Then we searched for groups of Galicians living in Germany. Some of the groups that we found are identified as: Berlín en Galego, Galegos na Alemania, Galegos en Baviera, Galegos en Heidelberg, Galegos en Hamburgo, Galegos en Bonn e arredores, Galegos emigrados, Gallegos en Alemania, Españoles en Hamburgo, Españoles en Stuttgart, Españoles en Alemania, Españoles en Duisburg, Españoles en Munich, Españoles en Berlín, Españoles en Saarland and Españoles en Frankfurt.

Through the created profile, and by posting on different groups, we spread the message about the work we were carrying out. Gradually, through conversations with different emigrants, we succeeded in gathering, approximately 50 potential participants interested in the issue. The use of social networks in the conducted study was the best option because the consulted databases (for example, the National Institute of Statistics [Spanish: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE], the Galician Statistical Institute, [Spanish: Instituto Gallego de Estadística, IGE] and EUROSTAT) as well as the literature available in Spain

until the present date on this subject did not provide us with the information we needed regarding the educational profile of the current population of Galician emigrants.

The methodological tools we used were a questionnaire via the program Google Docs and an interview outline.

The final questionnaire we prepared was sent to emigrants through the Facebook profile and, in some cases, by email. The aforementioned questionnaire was finally composed of 69 items, divided into four thematic blocks: I-Personal Data, II- Educational profile, III-Employment, IV-Self-perception, social relationships and expectations.

In the case of the interviews, we established six core areas, related to the core content of the questionnaire and we carried these out via Skype during the months of May and June 2015. In the end, we managed to interview 9 people (6 women and 3 men) aged between 23 and 30. The application of this technique allowed us more direct, face-to-face contact with our interviewees which provided us more details about them by observing gestures or by hearing the voice of the interviewees, aspects that we consider very positive for generating a climate of confidence, peace and closeness with the collective.

Results: Educational Profile, Self-Perception, Relationships and Social Networks, and Expectations

Educational Profile

The main results regarding the educational profile showed that this is a youth group which is led by, with the

same percentage of 23.5%, those who attended higher education (Master level or equivalent) or those with a three-year degree (Spanish: Diplomatura). Those were followed, secondly, by those who completed a five-year degree (Spanish: Licenciatura) (17.6%) and, finally, by those who completed a degree (14.7%).

A total of 28 people had university degrees, 3 had coursed vocational training (higher or intermediate level), 1 had a degree in Secondary Education, 1 indicated that he had only completed baccalaureate and 1 had a degree in artistic education.

Overall, in terms of specialization, highlighted was the Engineering and Architecture area with 9 people who had studies related to the same, and the area of Health Sciences with 7 people who had studied that.

In addition to university studies, vocational training (higher or intermediate level) referred to in the study, were those of Graphic Arts, Image and Sound, Hotel and Tourism, and Health.

Other studies indicated concerned arts education, among which the specialized fields coursed by some of the emigrants were music and visual arts and design.

Currently, most of the emigrants are not studying anymore and those who continue to are studying in German universities, in artistic educational centers, on their own or at the National University of Distance Education (Spanish: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, UNED). The level of training received in Spain was weighted by the majority (55.9%) as 'high' followed by the assessment of 'average' by 35.3% and 'low' by 2.9%.

Regarding the prior knowledge of the German language prior to their departure, 52.9% affirm they did have some sort of knowledge about this language, although only 8 people had an official certification, while 47.1% did not have any knowledge at all.

Other languages that they knew before departure to Germany and in which they did have an official certification were English, French, and Portuguese. In a very specific case, one of the subjects mentioned that he/she had certificates that were not official for the following languages: Basque, Catalan, Galician and sign language.

Self-Perception

To get to know their particular and personal views as emigrants, we asked them questions in the following lines during the interviews, getting the answers that follow:

How did you feel once you arrived in Germany? At first, what were your feelings, emotions and personal impressions in this country? Did you feel welcome?

Some answers we got:

At first I felt pretty bad because it was a new town; I did not know anyone...

[...] I was lucky at work and the German people I met were very kind to me and gave me a nice welcome.

I did not feel welcomed either by the Germans or the German bureaucracy.

[...] I felt fear, loneliness...

How do you think Galician youth emigrants are perceived by the German society?

These were their responses:

Where I am living we are all Spanish emigrants, or Südländer as they call us ... contemptuously. [...] they have the perception that we migrate there to steal their jobs...

[...] That we came here demanding a lot... wanting to make a lot and that we do not make much effort...

[...] Everyone who is Spanish is very welcomed because of the training they have.

Currently, would you define yourself as a Galician emigrant, as a foreign worker, as just one more German, etc.?

The overwhelming response we got mentioned first, the status of 'emigrant' and secondly, that of 'worker'. Some people proposed their own self-identification as 'exiled', 'world citizen' or 'expatriate'.

Overall, according to the predominant response of the subjects of the sample (82.4%), the Galician youth immigrants in Germany are kindly welcomed, although the level of integration in the German society is reputed as 'medium'.

Relationships and Social Networks

The emigrant group in Germany participates in various activities and celebrations in the area where they live and keep in touch with Spanish people more than with German people. In fact, the Galician youth emigrants recognize that they keep in more direct contact in Germany with people who come from the Spanish autonomous communities of

Galicia, Andalucía, Castilla-La Mancha and Cataluña.

The main means of maintaining communication and relationship between the emigrant population is essentially the Internet and, more specifically, social networks, among them Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. These social networks play an important role, since the immediacy of response from members of the various groups facilitates the organization of different face-to-face meetings, announcement regarding housing availability or demand, or the search for multiple kinds of useful articles for youth emigrants, such as furniture.

An outstanding fact is that many of the people who are emigrants in the same region, city or town often create a closed Facebook group to keep in touch with people of the same origin living in that place.

Other media used are mobile phones and the WhatsApp app and/or email.

Expectations

The main expectations that they described are related to the return to their country of origin and with the things they miss from before their process of emigration.

In the case of return, we asked the following question: *Do you plan to return to your country?* The answer obtained in the interviews confirmed that their desire is to return (82.4% assured that). However, the answers given by the interviewees raised doubts about this matter because, although they want to return to Galicia, they consider that if there are not particular social, educational, work related or economic changes (for

instance greater job stability, better salaries, less abusive schedules, etc.), this return is not clear, or, at least, it will take longer than originally planned. In this sense, the vast majority marked the option *'I don't know'* as the one that best corresponded to their idea about returning to Galicia or not.

Their expectations of emigration previous to their departure from the country of origin were basically work upgrading, economic upgrading and, in some cases, extending their studies. As examples, we highlight some of the answers given about the issue addressed at the beginning of this epigraph:

[...] I always wanted to go abroad for a few years but not to stay here my whole life.

I wanted to find a job [...].

[...] when I was told I was hired (for the job) I thought it couldn't be true.

I wanted to gain experience, learn the language.

Conclusions

The study carried out allowed us to reach the following conclusion about the research problem set out at the beginning: that the educational profile of the Galician collective of migrants in Germany is correlated with people that have a high level of education, both university and vocational training or arts education. Moreover, some emigrants continue to extend their training in the Germany.

On the basis of the information gathered, it follows that it is necessary to carry out some changes in the education system and in the training of students. For instance, our informants have em-

phasized the need to improve the teaching of foreign languages, particularly regarding the methodologies used, and to also improve the teaching of use and management of Information and Communications Technology (I.C.T.).

With regard to self-perception, the vast majority of people identify and define themselves as an 'emigrant'. However, young Galician emigrants feel perfectly integrated in German society and maintain various contacts with other emigrants through Facebook. Although in some cases, at the beginning, their integration in the host country was hard and they had to deal with numerous obstacles such as the language barrier or cultural differences, nowadays their feelings are that they are better off and more welcomed than in the first days and months after their arrival.

The only doubts that remain to some extent in the minds of the emigrated group are: When will we return? Where will we be in a couple of years?

If socioeconomic status was clearly improving in the country of origin, maybe the answer would be easier and more immediate and there wouldn't be long moments of silence in the course of the answers to the people interviewed. They confirm that changes are needed in different areas (political, educational, economic, social or cultural) in order to encourage their return. They hope to return some day, they don't know when, but they hope the choice of emigration as an escape from the current situation never happens again, and that coming generations don't need to emigrate as they have had to do.

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Notes

- 1 This work was mentored and guided by senior lecturer Vicente Peña Saavedra of the University of Santiago de Compostela.