

Abstract

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Title : Trajectories of academic mobility: a qualitative study from a global perspective
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Background: The literature reviewed in the context of this master's programme frequently refers to the enormous and increasing flows of people in the global era (Dicken, 2007; Lechner, 2004; Yeates, 2008); consequently, these flows have different directions and motives and represent diverse types of migration and migrants. As a result, the pivotal point here is the specificity of scientific migration within the contemporary globalisation process but particularly related to those who are involved in the academic world.

Aims: The aim of this study is to analyse academic mobility from the perspective of the subjective experience of the actors involved. Consequently, this study tries to contribute to a better understanding of the academic mobility as a specific type of migration in the global era. In addition, it is expected to contribute to the sociological analysis of the academia. This study needs to be understood within the specificity of scientific migration and the nature of academic careers within the current globalisation process.

Method: The research consists of a qualitative study which examines opinions provided by interviews with people involved in the academia. It works with a purposive sampling based on the following aspects: gender, type of academic activity and region of the world. Hence, opinions have been provided by interviews with male and female between 23 to 40 years-old, who are conducting PhD studies or post-doctorate programmes, and some who are working as academic staff at the university level. Even though there are some limitations, this study can be considered reliable and valid. Ethical issues are very important and have been taken into account with responsibility. This study has followed the recommendations provided by the Swedish Research Council.

Results: A definition of trajectory of academic mobility; an analytical description of the components of the trajectories as well as the context in which they are embedded; a qualitative description of perceptions and opinions based on lived experience of academic mobility emphasising facilitators as well as barriers; and an exploratory analysis of the factors that shape the trajectories.

Conclusions: The trajectory of academic mobility can be defined as a dynamic, historical, contextualised and contested individual process and its main purpose is to build up an academic career –partially or entirely- abroad. This individual process which implies migration –temporarily, long-term or permanent- does not occur in isolation; by contrast, it functions in different levels –from a national level up to a global one- and it is embedded in a complex set of social and institutional networks which operates transnationally. The intersectionality of diverse factors articulated in different ways acts and shapes trajectories.

Key words: scientific migration; academic world; higher education; intersectionality