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School Performance of the Moroccan Students in the Spanish Educational System: The Municipality of Collado Villalba (Madrid Region)

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Abstract: In the present paper we analyse the school performance of the Moroccan secondary students in the municipality of Collado Villalba (Northern Madrid region). For this aim we discuss several socio-economic parameters such as the evolution of unemployment, vegetative growth or immigration rate, etc., that are related to school performance and perspectives in general. Our results show that the municipality has better parameters in terms of school performance and integration of the Moroccan students, compared to the average values of the Madrid region (and the country in general). There is even an improvement of the above parameters, compared to previous years, probably due to the better socio-economic characteristics of the municipality during the recent years, and to the educational and pedagogical effort from part of the municipality.

Keywords: *Moroccan students, school performance, integration.*

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Introduction

School failure and abandonment of the studies is a persistent phenomenon within the schooling group of immigrants living in European countries. In principle, school failure may be due to the economic disadvantage of the immigrant families, but these difficulties are aggravated by poor linguistic competence, adaptation to lifestyles and a different style of teaching from the immigrant's customs and culture (Garauday, 1995).

Many different aspects have been largely discussed in the Spanish educational literature concerning the different school projects and adaptation, the school materials and books, the culture of origin and the specific religious education, the vulnerability in the host country, and so on (Actis, 2002; Besalú, 2009; Fernández Enguía, 2008; García Castaño, 2008; Ovejero Bernal, 2002; De Prada, 1994). Among the difficulties generated by the system itself, one must highlight the concentration of foreign immigrant students in certain public centers (Aja 2000, Lovelace 1999), which is the result of two different phenomena: from one hand this is due to the geographic concentration of immigrants in certain neighborhoods; on the other hand, there is a tendency from part of the native students' parents to transfer their children to other schools where the proportion of immigrants is not so high (Aja, 2000).

This is a worrisome situation as the educational system collects the student from all sectors of the society and where the foreign immigrant population is included (Lovelace, 1999). The resources do not differ significantly among the centers that maintain a school population more culturally homogeneous. However, the additional teaching staff is not enough in the educational centers (mainly public ones), where a significant number of the students have a foreigner background.

Social relationships are established on similarity of skills and competences linked to general knowledge within a given culture. These require competences and values that become real handicaps for students from different cultures as their previous knowledge is worthless and they do not find space for expression. (Franzé, 1996). On the other hand, the maladjustment of the Western programs and values transmitted by the school system broaden the cultural distance between family and child immigrants that leads to permanent conflict situations within the family.

In the present study we pay attention to several of the above mentioned problems and especially to the integration of the Moroccan students into the secondary educational program at the municipality of Collado Villalba (Northern

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Madrid region). This is an interesting education problem as in general, the Moroccan students are among the collective who shows the highest rates of school abandonment. The problem has been largely discussed within the recent agenda of the Moroccan authorities, who have not hesitated to underline the need to educational support of the students residing in European countries, where France, Belgium, Holland and Spain are some of the most affected by this phenomenon (Moroccan Ministry Foreign Affairs, 2016).

In this paper we analyze the school performance of the Moroccan students living in the municipality of Collado Villalba, comparing it with previous studies (De Regil, 2001). Our analysis shows that the educational efforts from the part of the municipality during the last decade are fruitful and have substantially improved the school performance and the integration level of these students, contributing in this way to a better multicultural climate.

The paper is organized as follows: In Section 2 we give a brief socio-economic overview of the municipality of Collado Villalba. In Section 3 we present our analysis regarding the school performance and level of integration of the Moroccan students into the educational process. In Section 4 we give some recommendations for further improvement and involvement of the foreign students into the municipality social and educational process. Finally, in Section 5 we present our conclusions.

Social and economic overview of the municipality of Collado Villalba (Madrid region)

There are actually more than 150.000 Moroccan students attending school in Spain, but their school failure rate amounts to 40%, which is with 10% more than the native students. The vast majority of Moroccan students are enrolled in compulsory education, but only a low percentage of them exceed this grade level. Despite the economic sacrifices made by the families (each academic year costs an average of 850 euros per child in public education), Moroccan students have difficulties to approve in school. The young Moroccan are also less present in the post-compulsory secondary education (preparation for the Baccalaureate) than in the different levels of professional training, where they represent 2% and 6,5%, respectively of all Moroccans enrolled. This situation reflects an obvious school failure and undoubtedly affects the integration of the Moroccan students into the Spanish and European labor market (Fracaso, 2012).

In the present article we analyze the situation of the Moroccan students in the municipality of Collado Villalba, which belongs to Northern Madrid region. This municipality is situated at an altitude of 917 meters above sea level and has a population of 62.152 (2017), with a population density of 2.345,36 per km².

During the last two decades, the municipality had experienced an expansion due to the arrival of immigrants from different countries, mainly from Morocco, South America (Ecuador, Colombia, and Argentina) and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Ukraine). This fact led to the need of extensive pedagogical efforts in order to offer an educational platform permitting a suitable integration of the arriving foreigner students. In this sense, an institution to support the immigrant students has been created, which major aims are: to advise on the development of specific reception programs that favor the socio-affective insertion of the immigrant students in public and private concerted centers, favoring the incorporation of the intercultural perspective to the educational process; to orient with respect to material and methodological resources for the teaching of Spanish as a second language and to facilitate the incorporation of students with a lack of knowledge of Spanish (Support Immigrant Students, 2011).

Statistical data from 2017 shows that the number of foreigners in the municipality of Collado Villalba was 13.194 and 2.299 of them were less than 16 years old. The relative population growth in 2017 was 0,90%, compared to 0,62% for Madrid region, the youth degree - 16,85% (15,71% Madrid region), while the dependency ratio was 0,42% (0,49% Madrid region) for the same year.

The proportion of foreigners with regards to their citizenship was respectively 5,60% (American), 4,23% (African) and 0,46% (Asian). In the following Fig. 1 one can see how the migration rate has evaluated in the past decade, showing a peak in year 2000.

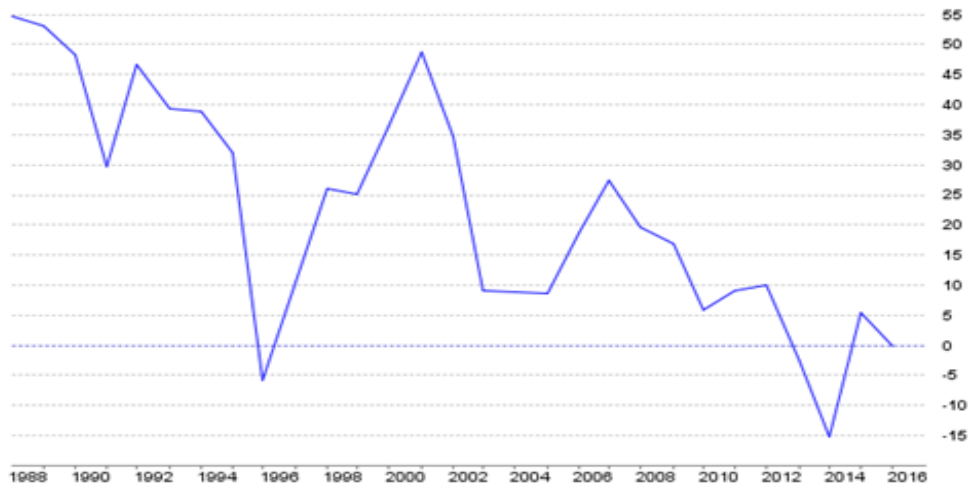


Figure 1. Evolution of the migration rate for Collado Villalba (Macroeconomic, 2018).

The evolution of the unemployment in the municipality of Collado Villalba during the last decade is presented in Table 1. It shows maximal values that correspond to the period 2011-2013 and which coexist with the peak of the country's economic crisis. As a general rule, the youth and immigrant unemployment's are about twice higher than the rest of the population.

Table 1. Evolution of the unemployment in Collado Villalba (Macroeconomic, 2018)

Year	Unemployment	Unemployed people	Population
March2018	11,98%	4.221	62.152
2017	11,95%	4.177	62.152
2016	13,19%	4.478	61.597
2015	14,47%	4.924	62.056
2014	15,69%	5.316	62.587
2013	17,30%	5.770	62.684
2012	18,31%	6.011	61.955
2011	16,58%	5.407	60.998
2010	15,43%	4.940	59.900
2009	15,85%	4.658	55.027
2008	11,91%	3.547	54.658
2007	8,82%	2.376	52.886
2006	7,09%	2.016	52.083

In Fig. 2 one can see how the vegetative growth of the municipality has decreased after 2008, probably due to the financial crisis, which had very strong negative effects in Spain.



Figure 2. Evolution of the vegetative growth for Collado Villalba (Macroeconomic 2018).

Data, corresponding to 2018, shows that the foreigners, affiliated to the social security in the municipality of Collado Villalba, are 17,74% (12,84% Madrid region). The percentage of registered contracts in 2017 for EU foreigners was 7,17% (5,99% Madrid region), while for foreigners from other countries outside the EU it was 12,43% (11,82% Madrid region).

Concerning the education in the municipality, the percentage of students per teacher is 13,75%, which is similar to that of Madrid region (13,10%). An opposite tendency comparing to Madrid region is observed regarding the schooling in public and private schools. The percentage corresponding to public schools is 80,23% (54,77% Madrid region) compared to private schools, where this percentage is only 19,77% (45,23% Madrid region).

Taking in mind the above mentioned data, one can conclude that the municipality of Collado Villalba is a relatively young and growing municipality, showing relatively good socio-economic parameters, that probably have their positive effects as well as on the educational process.

The performance of the Moroccan students in the municipality of Collado Villalba

In this study we focus on the secondary education of the Moroccan students living in the municipality of Collado Villalba and how the level of vulnerability affects their correct integration into the educational process. For this aim we have performed a detailed survey with randomly selected 40 Moroccan students (18 girls and 22 boys) from different secondary schools. Ten of them were aged between 16 and 18 years, while the rest were below 16 years old.

In our surveys we have investigated various parameters such as level of knowledge of Spanish language, regular assistance in classes, social interactions and integration, school performance, relation of the family with the school and the teachers, perspectives, and so on.

An interesting tendency has been also observed regarding the kind of the school differentiating between public and private. Within the group selected for the analysis, the preference for public or private school was the same: almost half of the students are studying in private school and the rest in public ones. The majority of the students are studying in the secondary cycle (ESO), while two students (one male and one female) are studying a vocational training program.

As a general social characteristic, only the fathers of the family unit were working. There were 2 cases, where both parents worked.

Our research reveals the following: the Moroccan students speak Spanish language fluently, but almost half of them (45%) have problems in writing. This misbalance is more pronounced by male, compared to female students, with a difference about 15% between both genders.

Regarding the assistance in classes, 90% are regularly assisting, 8% say they are assisting frequently and the rest are assisting rarely. This parameter is subject again to gender difference, which is favoring the female group, being the difference in about 18%.

The social interaction is an important indicator to measure the degree of acceptance of the Moroccan students by his/her classmates, as well as the way in which he/she relates to them. For this aim, a methodology based in measuring the number of interactions during the school process and after it, has been used. The results reveal that the number of unsuccessful interactions during the teaching process (for example the elaboration of a specific work in team) is higher compared to the interactions after the teaching process and mainly related to common plays or visits, although in general the students are regarding themselves as integrated. Social interaction varies slightly according to the gender. The scores are significantly higher for girls, compared to that for boys (53% to 47%). However, the direct answering to

the question concerning if they feel integrated, shows that 4 female students declared her selves as not integrated in the schools, where they are studying (one being public and the rest – private).

Of special discussion is the analysis of the school performance (Fig.3). 19% pass all the subjects at the first time, 52% pass several subjects and 27% pass only few subjects at the first time. After presenting themselves at the compensatory exams, the performance is enhanced, showing finally that only 3 students from the selected Moroccan students have repeated a school year in their respective public school. These results show that the students are enough motivated to follow the school process.

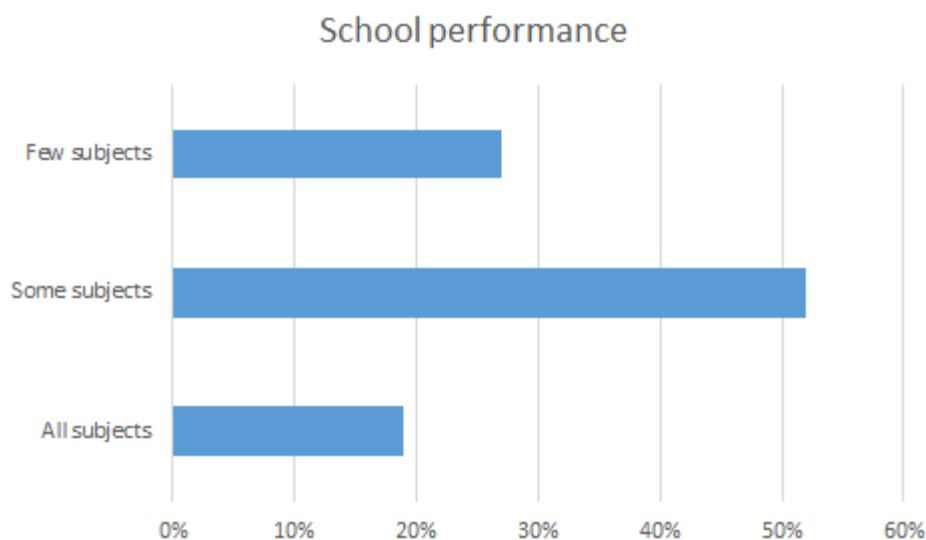


Figure 3. School performance according to the passing rate of the subjects (original data).

Our results also show that there is a weak feedback from the part of the family, but in general there is an interest on the school process showed by the families.

In the study we were interested to see as well how the performance, the type of the school and the perception of integration affect the student's future plans. Our analysis shows that male and female students are enough motivated to continue their studies in a university once finishing the high school. This decision does not strongly depend on the type of the secondary education (public or private). Even two of the students, who have repeated a school year, have expressed a desire to continue their education in a university center.

Our analysis also shows that there is some tendency within the group of female students, feeling themselves not integrated within the school process. Actually, these students don't have enough motivation to continue their studies, although having a relatively good performance during the secondary school process. This is an interesting result as it shows the consequences of the lack or of the low level of integration of the Moroccan students on their future plans. These results might be also observed in the general case of foreign students.

Summarizing, our analysis shows the tendency of improvement compared to similar previous studies (De Regil, 2001) in terms of school performance, integration and perspectives of the Moroccan students in the municipality of Collado Villalba. The current characteristics are better compared to other peripheral municipalities within Madrid region and are above the medium ones, corresponding to the country. All that shows that the educational strategy from part of the educational centers and the municipality towards the foreign students (in this analysis the Moroccan ones), accomplished during the last decade, is correct and it contributes to better secondary school results and better integration and multicultural coexistence within the municipality.

Recommendations

Although the better characteristics of the school performance and the integration of the Moroccan students in the school process in the municipality of Collado Villalba, we have studied in this paper, there are still many different aspects to be improved. Some of them are the participation in common projects at school and municipality level, related to sustainable goals such as participation for a better education, work and education towards gender equality, responsible consumption, climate action, as well as an interest to participate in the current debate for building a Municipality for all. Intercultural projects and exchange of good practice and knowledge are welcomed as well.

Conclusions

In the present paper we analyzed the school performance of the Moroccan students and their integration in the school process by focusing on the secondary educational system at the municipality of Collado Villalba. We performed a

detailed survey with randomly selected 40 Moroccan students (18 girls and 22 boys) from different secondary schools by investigating various parameters such as level of knowledge of Spanish language, regular assistance to classes, social interactions and integration, school performance, relation of the family with the school and the teachers, perspectives, and so on.

Our results show that the socio-economic characteristics of the municipality have been substantially improved in terms of unemployment and affiliation to the social security system, compared to the average of the Madrid region. This fact has its reflection on the school performance and integration of the Moroccan students as well as on their perception about future perspectives. Thus, compared to the medium of the Madrid region, as well as with previous results on the same municipality, one observes a positive trend in the school performance and integration of the students with this immigration background. The phenomenon is probably due to the better socio-economic characteristics and the education and pedagogical efforts from part of the municipality and the secondary schools during the past several years.

Finally we give some recommendations for future improvement mainly based on participation in common projects at school and municipality level, and related to some common basic sustainability goals.

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