

Geography and Citizenship Education: Migrations and Pathways of Educational Research

Emilia SARNO¹

ANSAS Molise-University of Molise, ITALY

Abstract

In this paper some pathways of geographical analysis will be illustrated and discussed, seen from a didactic point of view. The geographical theme chosen is that of migration. Migratory phenomena and the problems associated with it have always been a classic theme of geography; today however, they are of a particular interest and will allow us to promote a shared ethic. In this way there is education for citizenship. Geography, as a form of knowledge which helps us in interpreting the world, is able to educate us in an understanding of the social-economic processes that occur as well as in the construction of a sense of 'multi-belonging.'

These issues must be dealt with and developed according to method of research and discovery in such a way that both emigration and immigration are focused on through an educational itinerary based upon theoretical reflection and on the spot experience. In fact, it illustrates the path of educational research carried out training courses for teachers who have been the laboratory to develop educational activities described. In this way the process of analysis will have both a valid formative educational and scientific value.

Keywords: Migration, geography and citizenship, educational research

Introduction: Geography and citizenship education

Citizenship education should be understood both as a growth of a sense of belonging and as a respect for 'otherness'. The sense of belonging indicates an ability to build a sense of unity, while 'otherness' is the discovery of the diversity of another ecological, historical, political and cultural system. In this way man develops in the environment in which he lives, in the knowledge this environment is trans-scalar and that he belongs

¹ ANSAS Molise-University of Molise, via De Sanctis I-86100 Campobasso, ITALY.
E-mail: sarno[at]unimol.it

to it as a citizen of the world. A sense of belonging is such if it is sustained by a clear analysis of one's own experience as well as an accurate knowledge of the experience of others: this kind of formation is a constructive opening-out towards others and towards different kinds of cultures. Being open and knowledgeable is something which can only be developed in educational environments, where both education and formation make use of instruments suitable for an adequate reading and interpretation of reality. Future citizens should find themselves at home when moving between the different levels of geographical and cultural reality: as local, European or even world citizens. Thus, it is important to read the documents on this site <http://www.cittadinanzaeuropea.net>. They help to educate students to be citizens of the EU and understand the economic and political dynamics of this large geographical area.

This necessity is today seen as an ethical urgency, as stated by Horatio Capel (2008): "There remains the ethical dimension, a fundamental question indeed. We should be able to establish social consensus about ethical principles in a secular society. And these ethical principles should relate to the social contract that allows us to live in society and to address the threats that exist²".

Geography, as a form of knowledge which helps us in interpreting the world, is able to educate us in an understanding of the socioeconomic processes that occur as well as in the construction of a sense of 'multi-belonging'. Furthermore, it supplies us with the instruments and methods of analysis of documents and experience, events and phenomena, and opens up new horizons of expectation and construction of reality. We will therefore illustrate and discuss some pathways of geographical analysis, seen from a didactic point of view, with particular reference to students of middle and secondary level education. The geographical theme chosen is that of migration, this is because whilst political borders are becoming evermore fluid, other kinds of social-cultural barriers are being formed within communities and these are potentially more dangerous given that they have negative effects on the organization of the territory itself (De Vecchis, 2010). Migratory phenomena and the problems associated with it have always been a classic theme of geography; today however, they are of a particular interest and will allow us to promote a shared ethic.

In this article, after discussing the literature through the geographical importance of migration flows, we show how this subject has been discussed in training courses for teachers. In these courses were developed teaching strategies necessary to deal with the migration issue in high schools and educate the culture of citizenship. The second part of the article in fact describes the teaching methods developed for their realization and educational paths identified.

²The original thought of Capel is: "Queda todavía la dimensión ética, una cuestión sin duda fundamental. Deberíamos ser capaces de establecer unos principios éticos socialmente consensuados, en una sociedad laica. Y deberíamos relacionar esos principios éticos con el contrato social que nos permite vivir en sociedad y hacer frente a las amenazas que existen".

Migration as the geographic theme

The study of migration in a geographical key allows us to obtain an overall reading of both the territory of departure as well as the territory of origin of the migrants in terms of settlement, in distribution and transformation of economic activities, about problems related to cultural integration.

If migration is considered as a dynamic form of demographic change of both a region and a nation, it points to vulnerability in any specific social-environmental reality; this vulnerability is to be considered a reality also for the host nations as they will themselves inevitably undergo transformation and adaptation. A geographical perspective on this issue will enable us to analyze a number of different indicators and will not be limited to simply quantifying the number of emigrants and immigrants. The territorial area needs to be considered as a whole, and should not be limited to a classical/traditional method of understanding emigration as a response to lack of resources. The dynamics of migration is not to be considered as an immediate action, a sort of expulsion, neither is it to be defined solely numerically as does the push/pull factors theory, which considers an increase in population as the decisive factor in migratory movements and the necessity of manpower as the element which draws people to the host country.

A critical appraisal of the push/pull factors theory is made by Boyd, 1989, and Sivini, 2000, both of whom have highlighted the importance of the individual migrant in the decision-making process as well as the social influence and of the group to which the migrants belong rather than motivation based on population density.

Geographical analysis must, in fact, not only determine migration flow again but also reconstruct the causes of the migration or resettling, the systematic nature of the problem, in order to supply a dynamic picture of the areas of study. The study of the dynamics of migration requires an “integrated approach” (Cristaldi, 2008), in order to understand the diverse and complex reasons behind it.

Furthermore, a comparison should be made where possible between those areas subject to emigration and those subject to immigration, in relation both to movements outside a country and to internal migration. Giuliana Andreotti states that “when we speak of emigration from a country it is necessary to imagine immigration into another” (Andreotti, 2006, p. 66).

The literature on emigration however, only partially deals with the problems linked to the analysis of behavior within a community or of an individual behavior. The immigrant has to re-evaluate his identity in relation to the host country in which he has settled, he has to try to fit in and accept his new position. “At a basic level, migration is a human link exists between places—the place of departure and the place of arrival and settlement” (Massey, 2001, p. 29).

The migrant does not so much have a tendency to return to the land of his origin as to maintain a strong tie with it whilst living in another country; he seeks to maintain his roots, while at the same time he is trying to fit into a new context. This multi-belonging is the complex solution of those that have to live simultaneously in different realities, trying to overcome the fact of losing a part of his sense of self. The problem has been debated in a session of the *X Coloquio Internacional de Geocrítica in Barcellona 2008*, where behavioral models of emigrants were discussed. “Immigrants reinvent new ways to reinterpret the everyday outside the national context and constructs a hybrid world³” (De Almeida, 2008, p. 1).

Furthermore, it would be valuable to take into account the thought processes involved in any decision to emigrate: cultural motivations have their say in the decision-making process and they are to be taken into consideration together with economic reasons. By paying attention, for example, to each individual’s motives, will allow a reconstruction not only of the conditions which migrants found themselves in but also of the cultural difficulties found when trying to adapt to their new social context.

Migration flows, such as analysis and discussion of different aspects, are an important topic for research and teaching. Particularly important is the study of economic, human and social reasons that drive people to move and their behavior in adapting to different realities. These arguments are useful from the educational point of view because they allow students to understand the problematic inherent in integration. If students understand everything they are taught to respect the citizenship of all. For these reasons, it is necessary to consider how to start a process of educational research to address the issue of migration with the aim of educating for citizenship.

Action Research for a didactics of migration flows

The themes which have been here dealt with theoretically have been discussed in the formation courses for teachers of secondary schools. Since 2009 in Italy the Ministry for Higher Education and Research has established biennial courses for the formation of future teachers of different disciplines including Italian, History and Geography. In each Italian region at least one university had the responsibility of organizing the courses. As a professor of geography teaching (at University of Molise) I had the opportunity of forming future geography teachers. As such I was able to discuss the topics raised in this article and to also evaluate its didactic effect in courses held in the years 2006-2009. The sample of future teachers participating in the courses is significant because generally about 60-80 attended. They had diverse cultural experiences and many of them, whilst attending, also taught as supply teachers in

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middle and secondary schools. With those teachers I applied the action-research method so as to put into relation the theoretical with the practical levels. We considered fundamental views on action research according to the thought of Henry and Kemmis (1985) or of Ebbutt (1985).

According to the first “Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. These participants can be teachers, students or principals and the process is most empowering when undertaken collaboratively, though sometimes it can be undertaken by individuals and sometimes in cooperation with outsiders.”

Ebbutt (1985) explains that “action research is the systematic study of attempts to change and improve educational practice by groups of participants by means of their own practical actions and by means of their own reflections upon the effects of those actions.” Following this methodology, we discussed the topics and the didactic methods summarized in paragraph 4, then we established the two pathways presented in paragraphs 5 and 6. They were then put into practice in school two pathways and any difficulties or good results were talked about from time to time.

The fundamental objectives we established to guarantee coherence between different experiences were:

- 1) Migration flow creates citizenship education
- 2) The learning itinerary has to be structured as a research-discovery approach for the students
- 3) They had to analyze the relationship between a territory and migration flows (migration here included both immigration and emigration)
- 4) The results were to be summarized in reports and posters produced by the students.

During the discussions both positive and critical aspects emerged. The following were considered to be positive results:

- 1) Discuss the educational use of migration flows
- 2) Guide students to think about why groups of people leave their homeland
- 3) Guide students to think about how migrants settle and fit in in the host country
- 4) Find and analyze any necessary documents
- 5) Suggest ways in which to check and summarize the results.

Some difficulties also emerged:

- 1) Organize the timing of the research-discovery to be done with the students
- 2) Some students have difficulty in analyzing the documents
- 3) Coordinate the experience of different schools.

Over a period of three years I have been able to put together the results of various experiences; many of those taking part in the formation courses put into effect the pathways and the results obtained have shown their validity. Through tests and reports, I could gather their perceptions and outcomes of teaching activities. In particular, they have kept a diary in which he described the critical and positive data. The entire experience was seen as a form of research for the teachers and, as we shall see, as a discovery for the students.

The didactic methods for the theme of migration flows

The most suitable didactic approach, in the high schools, for these discussed topics must be to research discovery through the study of a specific territory and consequently a specific community. It is important to choose a geographic area that was subject to or emigration or immigration and encourage students to analyze what happened.

Students will move from an analysis of the problem, which requires a process involving perception and observation, to a survey where data and information is collected through a study of source materials, documents and maps. The validity of the hypothesis on which the study is based is evaluated and any aspects which do not fit the facts of the information obtained are cast aside. There are three main factors to be taken into account:

- 1) Credible sources of information
- 2) Instruments such as questionnaires to obtain the information
- 3) The tabulation of data.

As far as the sources are concerned, it would be useful to make use of statistics and research reports, but also of any sources not published such as photographic material, private epistolary sources, and any informal means of communication used.

It is necessary to have specific times planned for the research and collection of information, and, subsequently, for the tabulation of data, obtaining many and useful sources of information from a number of different areas, such as town councils, archives, and libraries.

Source materials are not sufficient to illustrate a present-day context which has not yet been fully analyzed; it is therefore important to enrich the information obtained from the sources with data collected directly by the students through questionnaires aimed at preselected social groups who belong to their community. It might also be useful to collect information from further afield by making use of digital technology. This type of survey takes into account the people directly involved in migration and it establishes a direct relationship with their testimony and their experience.

Data must not only be collected but it needs to be recorded, tabulated and correlated so as to be able to compare different territories with the aim of discovering

the continual migrations or the presence of a settled group of immigrants. Together with graphs, cartograms should also be used as these will allow us to rapidly find the object of the study, the movements and the settlements in the host territory, the aim being to work making use of both a quantitative and qualitative approach. An organic planning which takes into account these three approaches makes didactically easier an integration of the factors discovered, the global observation of migration in its evolution, the synthesis of the characteristics of the movement and behavior of the different groups.

By following these guide-lines the reconstruction of a territory can be made, which then becomes a learning environment. Given that migration produces not only social and demographic changes but also modifies behavior within a particular context, it becomes a living and vital reality, and this type of study makes the student-observers effective participants in a research project which is not just made up of numbers and documents, but of living people and experiences. This methodology must be applied in the following two paths.

Below are summarized the guide-lines for a geo-didactic approach which aims at analyzing the behavior of migrants in Figure1.

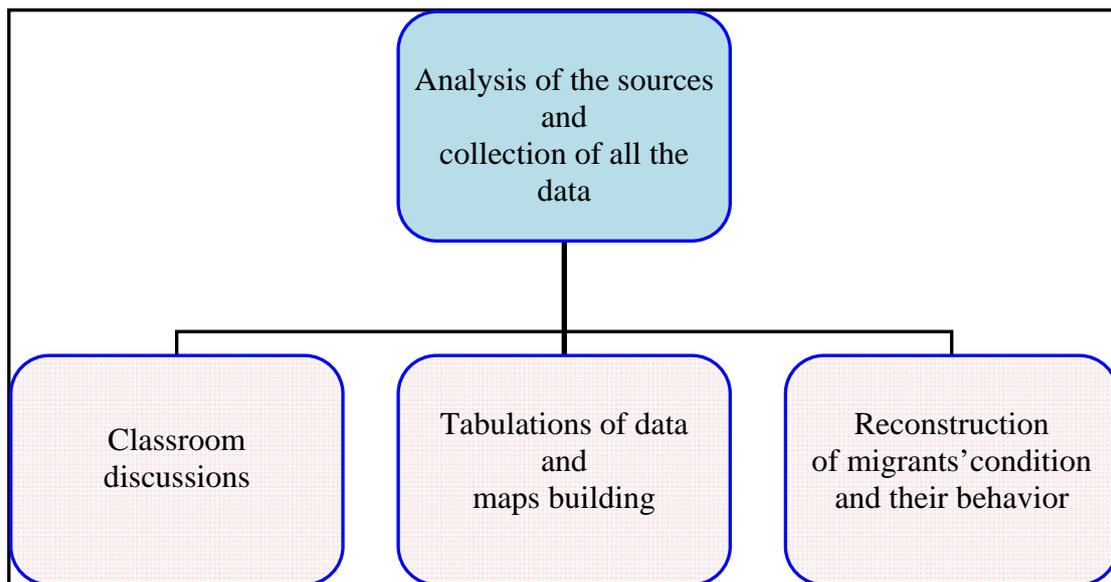


Figure 1. *The Guide-Lines for a Geo-Didactic Approach to Migration*

The first pathway: Emigration as a discovery of a community

The first case that presents itself is a path to address the immigration issue. Students must begin to ask questions about why in the population of a specific area has decided to leave the own country. Following this line of thought, the immediate perception

following observation and an initial survey of the phenomena (through information collected in an informal way) leads to a consideration of emigration as a 'problem'.

An analysis of the problem will lead to a research survey: it becomes relevant to ask questions on human mobility, on the motives for moving and transferring; on this basis data and information is collected through a study of the sources, of documents and thematic maps. In this way an evaluation of the validity of the initial hypothesis is made and any aspects that are not confirmed by the information are set aside.

The route planning that has been experienced is the following:

1. Direct experience in the community through an observation of the students;
2. Analysis of the problem;
3. Formulation of the hypothesis to understand the reasons for the phenomena;
4. Collection of statistical data to quantify the phenomena;
5. Careful examination of the source material and the documents;
6. Observation of the territory and an analysis of the social-environmental signs following emigration;
7. A survey of the host community of existing relationships; analysis of the social and economic conditions;
8. Emphasis on 'micro-histories' by making use of photographic and epistolary material and through direct interviews;
9. Making use of graphs and maps both of which are an indispensable didactic support and which can also be developed and elaborated by the students;
10. Individual or group elaboration of summaries of the entire work.

The data, collected through source material and formal and informal documents can be recorded, tabulated and correlated to give rise to opportune reflection on the reasons leading people to migrate. The use of cartograms will allow a rapid discovery of the object of study, of the movements and of the settlements in the territory of destination. The aim being of working at both a quantitative and qualitative level: the tabulation of the data and the introduction of indices specific to demographic study are an objective point of departure; a comparison of the results, the contextualization of the data and their analysis will, however, open up a pathway to reflection and interpretation. Detailed analysis of the motivations of migrants not only enriches students' knowledge but will make them participate of their behaviors and problems.

The second pathway: Immigration, experiences and comparisons

The second case to deal with students is the analysis of immigration. It is necessary to understand the phenomena of immigration and its impact on a reality which is primarily urban, and by deeper studies of its impact at a local level. In this case the problem is not to aim at the reconstruction of a phenomenon which has stabilized, but studies should adapt themselves to an emerging situation which is to be discovered and which should educate towards a sense of multiculturalism. The issue requires studies to be

made in perspective: the research-discovery approach must be promoted with immediacy in mind and with attention being paid to the future, albeit only the near future. Furthermore, the issue should lead to a desire to understand the problems of integration and educate towards comparison and living together. The following is to be the itinerary of study that has been experienced:

- 1) The perception of people coming from other nationalities;
- 2) The role of immigrants and their working conditions;
- 3) Specific indicators to understand ways of living;
- 4) A discovery of their territorial areas and the reasons for migration;
- 5) Cultural, religious and behavioral differences.

Two fundamental aspects should be kept in mind for such a plan of study: the utilization of indicators to analyze, in an objective way, the conditions of life and the discovery through different sources, of the global way of life of the immigrants and so do away with prejudice.

The most important indicators are: legal immigration, an evaluation of the illegal immigrants, work experience, way of life, and the possibilities of integration. The use of interviews, in these situations, is the most suitable instrument to obtain information and data, besides that which is supplied by the ISTAT (Italian Institute of collecting statistics) and by the local authorities. Even in these cases the data collected can be tabulated or expressed in map or graph form.

Another aspect which should be privileged is the discovery of the culture of the countries from which immigrants come mainly by direct comparison but also through the reading of articles or texts, or viewing films or television documentaries. It is in this way that a close association between the study of human mobility and education towards multi-cultural reality can be established. No empty planning should be promoted, but the issue of migration as a way of educating towards social and cultural plurality should be dealt with.

Discussion of the results

The entire learning experience has demonstrated its vitality; in three years about 60 participants of the formation courses took part and put into effect the didactic methods presented in paragraph 4. They produced reports which described how they had achieved the aims of the pathways and their perceptions were gathered in questionnaires. By synthesizing the information in this way it became clear that they were didactically valid. Figure 2 summarizes the perceptions of 60 teachers who have fully experienced the two routes and stated that 70% of students have gained a different opinion with respect to migrants and have acquired a culture of citizenship. Knowledge of diversity could be addressed through geography which indicates the particular relationship between every social group and the territory. A close association between

the study of human mobility and citizenship education can be established, because the issue of migration as a way of educating towards social and cultural plurality should be dealt with.

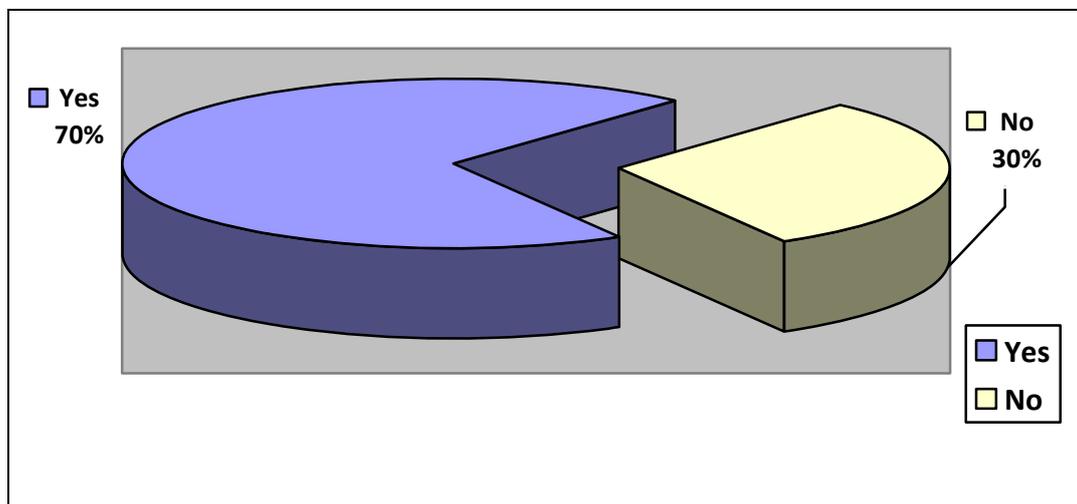


Figure 2. *The results according to teachers*

The teachers guided the students to think about emigration, and how an environment can be transformed both by the absence as well as the arrival of migrants. The pupils learnt to analyze the causes which lead people to move to another country and the looked into the behavior of immigrants in the new country such as their tendency to form associations.

The approach applied was a whole new experience for them as they studied not only the sources and the documents but also had to observe their environment (city or village) in order to understand the changes that had occurred. They learned about new topics and also developed new attitudes towards emigration and immigrants.

The teachers also experienced something new in the didactic research; they were able to reflect on the importance of emigration and on its educational use. They carefully studied the literature dealing with this issue, came to understand the limits of the push/pull factors theory and saw the necessity of looking at the social and cultural aspects which lead people to emigrate. Furthermore, through studying migration flows, they were able to put into practice citizenship education.

The entire study was put into practice following the research-action method which has demonstrated its scientific validity. The initial hypothesis -migration flows for citizenship -was developed in didactically tested pathways. At the same time didactic methods involving students directly were surveyed, methods which required field-work as well as studying documents. Together with the students the young teachers who took part in the formation courses also experienced both research work and direct action.

Biographical statement

Emilia SARNO, PhD in Historical Geography is researcher in educational methodology at ANSAS Molise in Italy (Ministerial Institution of Higher Education and Research) and professor/advisor of Geography at University of Molise and at other Italian Universities. She has published numerous books and papers about geography didactics and historical geography. About the geography didactics, her focus area concerns teaching methodologies, relationship between geography and spatial intelligence, geography education.

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