



Migration Experiences of South American Women Faculty in two Mexican Public Universities

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to analyze the experiences of migration of South American women scholars, their arrival and incorporation in two Mexican universities, one in the center-south and another located in the north-east of the country. We assume that in their migratory process, the academics acquired a series of experiences that allowed them to implement strategies to move from stress situations to learning in that process. The biographical method was used, through life stories, interviewing scholars who mostly come from South American countries. The findings showed that scholars launched strategies of mimicry, creativity, pragmatism and perseverance, despite differences in socioeconomic development of states and research development in public universities where they work.

KEYWORDS

South American women scholars. Experiences. Mexico.

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Experiencias de Migración de Académicas Sudamericanas en dos Universidades Públicas Mexicanas

RESUMEN

El objetivo del artículo es analizar las experiencias de migración de académicas sudamericanas, su llegada e incorporación en dos universidades mexicanas, una en el centro-sur y otra ubicada en el noreste del país. Partimos del supuesto que en su proceso migratorio, las académicas adquirieron una serie de experiencias que les permitió poner en práctica estrategias para transitar de situaciones de tensión a un aprendizaje en dicho proceso. Se utilizó el método biográfico, a través de relatos de vida, entrevistando a académicas que provienen, en su mayoría, de países de Sudamérica. Los hallazgos mostraron que las académicas pusieron en marcha estrategias de mimetización, creatividad, pragmatismo y de perseverancia, pese a las diferencias de desarrollo socioeconómico de los estados y del desarrollo en la investigación en las universidades públicas en donde laboran.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Académicas sudamericanas. Experiencias. México.

Experiências De Migração de Acadêmicas Sul-americanas em Duas Universidades Públicas Mexicanas

RESUMO

O objetivo do artigo é analisar as experiências de migração de acadêmicas sul-americanas, sua chegada e incorporação em duas universidades mexicanas, uma no centro-sul e outra localizada no nordeste do país. Assumimos que, em seu processo migratório, as acadêmicas adquiriram uma série de experiências que lhes permitiram implementar estratégias para passar de situações de estresse para a aprendizagem nesse processo. Utilizou-se o método biográfico, por meio de histórias de vida, entrevistando acadêmicas que vêm principalmente de países sul-americanos. Os achados mostraram que as acadêmicas lançaram estratégias de mimetismo, criatividade, pragmatismo e perseverança, apesar das diferenças no desenvolvimento socioeconômico dos estados e no desenvolvimento da pesquisa em universidades público onde trabalham.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Acadêmicas sul-americanas. Experiências. México.

Introduction

The relevance of the phenomenon of migration in the twentieth century was often framed by the causes that generated the displacements, by the total figures of the flows or by the countries of origin and those of destination that participated in it. For a long time, in the counting of these data, a central part was left aside to analyze and understand this phenomenon in an integral way: Women. At least until the mid-sixties, “the analysis of female migration was a recurrent absence in population studies” (ARIZA, 2000, p 39, own translation). The first approaches about migrant women, placed them within “the unprotected vulnerable groups and as passive recipients of development, they were generally described as the man’s wife or man’s mother initiating migration” (GREGORIO, 1998, p.24, own translation).

The contributions that showed the importance of women's work in international migration and development occurred later, through the emphasis on the female productive role as well as on equal opportunities in relations between women and men in the world market (AJAMIL, 1999 quoted in DE VILLOTA, 1999); part of these reflections helped to contradict the idea that only men had contributions in public spaces. It was not until the 1980’s that migrant women were fully recognized through their work and their capacity for social organization (GREGORIO, 1998; DE VILLOTA, 1999; PARELLA, 2003). It was from that decade that a “new stage in the studies on migrant women from a gender perspective” began (WOO, 1995, p.143, own translation).

In the 1990s, broad groups of women in international migration were identified as the *feminization of flows* (CASTLES and MILLER, 1993), to account for their growing participation. A decade later, some organizations (UN, 2006) would point out that women “represent 56 million of a total of 118 million migrants, an approximate ratio of 91 women per 100 men” (UNDP, 2000, quoted in LIPSZYC, 2004, p.7, own translation).

The visibility of women in skilled migrations occurred until recent years at international and regional level, when the analysis of academic, scientific, businesswomen and professional women migrations began (STANG, 2005; KOFMAN and RAGHURAM , 2005, IREDALE, 2005; SKACHKOVA, 2007; RIAÑO and BAGHDADI, 2007). Those studies documented especially the migrations of qualified women from the South to the North.

This paper’s approach on migrant women is preceded by other studies that have been developed from Latin America, some of which focus on female professors, entrepreneurs and scientists (MEYER and SALGADO, 2002; STANG, 2005; RIAÑO, 2007; ORTIZ and MENDOZA, 2007; HOPENHAYM, 2009; IZQUIERDO, 2010; ESTRADA and IZQUIERDO, 2011; FLORES, 2011; ROMO, 2015; IZQUIERDO and GUZMÁN, 2016) which we have reviewed in order to recover and analyze the experience of migrant women faculty from the academic spaces of the global South, particularly our research is focused on Mexico, from a fieldwork that was developed in two public universities.

Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, exiled Spanish philosopher who worked at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, said that “the decisive thing is not to be here or there but how you are” in exile (SÁNCHEZ, 1997, p 47, own translation). This exploratory research aimed to know “how it is” in the mobility and migration of women faculty from South American countries who (mostly) live and work in Mexico. Why do they move and migrate towards academic spaces of the global South? How were their experiences in those particular spaces? And what strategies did they put into practice and why? We begin our analysis with the assumption that in their migratory process, women faculty acquired a series of experiences that allowed them to implement strategies to move from stressful situations towards a *learning of knowing* how to be in migratory contexts.

From the field of education, experience is understood as “what happens to me” (LARROSA, 2006, p.88, own translation); but the experience also supposes a particular, specific event, not everything is experience, it must be something “not foreseen”, something new for the subject. It is an event that does not depend on the subject, it is “external” to the subject; it is an event that breaks in, that happens “in me, not before me or in front of me” (p.89, own translation). According to Larrosa (2006), the experience is going to arise in a unique way in each subject, but for this to be possible, it is necessary that the subject make an introspection of what happens to her, representing the tension (or tensions) that a certain situation produces for her, and how that can disturb her own *tranquility*; it will be through the implementation of actions or strategies that the subject could solve or manage the tensions that are presented. Tensions were understood in this study, according to Dubar (2002), as points of crisis that do not prevent or stop the subjects for action, but can promote it. The actions or strategies are defined as “an assembly of coordinated actions to obtain a victory, in the interactional level and that it is dynamic” (KASTERSZEIN, 1999, p.30, own translation). The ultimate goal of implementing a strategy is the recognition of the subject, of her specific existence in a society, institution or group. In this case, we refer to the context of two public universities in Mexico.

Methodology

The biographical method was used in this research, through the life story (BERTAUX, 1993). Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted (VALLES, 2002) to women faculty affiliated to two Mexican public universities (south-central and north-east). Three lines of analysis were specifically focused in the interviews: reasons for mobility and migration, arrival and academic work (tensions) in Mexico, and the actions they put into practice to solve those tensions. A group of women faculty was contacted for an interview from both universities (11 and 8 respectively), from Latin American countries. However, we did not receive an answer from all of them, and finally the study was carried out only with the researchers who responded to the request. Most of them come from South American countries: Brazil (1), Argentina (2), Colombia (4), Cuba (2) and Panama (1), from the areas of science and engineering, social sciences, humanities and education, natural sciences, health and behavioral sciences.

Table 1. The academics participating in the study

Participant	Year	Country of origin	SNI	Name of the PhD obtained	Year of arrival in Mexico
1-pan-unor	46 years old	Panamá	1	PhD in Materials Engineering	1989
2-col-unor	51 years old	Colombia	1	PhD in Law	2001
3-bra-unor	72 years old	Brasil	1	PhD in Political Science	1981
4-arg-unor	68 years old	Argentina	3	PhD in Chemistry	1981
5-cub-unor	67 years old	Cuba	1	PhD in Chemistry	1993
1-cub-ucsur	43 years old	Cuba	Do not	PhD in Psychology	1999
2-col-ucsur	55 years old	Colombia	1	PhD in Education	1982
3-arg-ucsur	42 years old	Argentina	Do not	PhD in Ecology	2004
4-col1-ucsur	48 years old	Colombia	1	PhD in Medicine	2002
5-col2-ucsur	42 years old	Colombia	C	PhD in Botanica	2003

Source: own elaboration based on the field work carried out

Some elements of the mobility and migration heterogeneity, as well as the schooling and specialization in science of the participants in the study, are shown in Table 1. Women faculty came mainly to the country in the 1980's and 2000's. In Mexico during the 1980's, it was promoted one of the most important policies in order to keep scientists: the National System of Researchers (SNI [for its Spanish acronym])¹. It is worthwhile noting that in comparison with this group of women faculty, there are others such as those from the former Soviet Union, Germany and France, to name a few, who arrived mainly in the 1990's

¹ The National System of Researchers, Sistema Nacional de Investigadores (SNI) in Spanish, was created in order to "to recognize the work of people dedicated to producing scientific knowledge and technology. Recognition is granted through peer evaluation and consists of granting the appointment of a national researcher. This distinction symbolizes the quality and prestige of scientific contributions. Parallel to the appointment, economic incentives are granted, the amount of which varies with the assigned level" (National Council of Science and Technology, CONACyT [for its Spanish acronym] www.conacyt.mx, own translation).

(IZQUIERDO, 2011), just when the Mexican government launched different programs for the attraction of qualified personnel at an international level, and developed actions jointly with the different authorities of public universities, to promote the internationalization of higher education. These actions focused mainly on student and faculty mobility, as well as in educational exchange programs and scholar visits in research and training in science. All of the above formed a context of opportunities for some of the women faculty in this study so that they arrive in the country also in the first decade of the 2000's.

Are Mexican Universities Recipients of Qualified International Immigration? Inquiry in Two Public Universities

Mexico has been traditionally a host country for exiled professionals and immigrants. In reference to this paper's topic, the first immigrations date from 1826 and came from the Central American Republic of Guatemala (MEYER and SALGADO, 2002). The most recent history of these mobilities to the country spanned from the 1940's to the 1980's, with exiles from Peru, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba (1940), Colombia, Brazil (1960), Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Nicaragua (1970) and Guatemala (1980). These last human mobilities were characterized by the political persecution of dictatorial governments, that settled in Latin America and the Caribbean in those decades (MEYER and SALGADO, 2002), with the help of the United States and the nationals of those countries.

Research on all of these groups is not as extensive as the Spanish exile case (during the 1930's and 1940's), that shows studies on professionals and personnel in academia and science who arrived in Mexico and their related experiences. The studies that we have identified so far in Mexico are historical and have to do mainly with exile and migration from Chile, Argentina, Colombia and Cuba. In this sense, we agree with Martínez-Assad (2008) that although all the groups of exiles and immigrants who have arrived in the country have influenced the construction of the "Mexican nation" and of educational institutions, as in the case of public universities, they have not yet been studied in depth (p.23, own translation) and from the research and teaching spaces in host universities.

In recent decades, the study of immigrant faculty and scholars in Mexico has become relevant. It was from the 1990's and the 2000's when the participation of these groups was shown through case studies, as well as the implementation of specific national programs, and in relation to cooperation agencies in the framework of two of the internationalization dimensions of university identified by Oregioni (2017): Education and research. The first one through programs of "student mobility" and the second, by "scientific diasporas" (p.118, own translation), whose actions were concretized, in the case of Mexico, through the International Program of Young Doctors in the 1990's; the Subprogram of Patrimonial Excellence Chairs that was also inaugurated in the 1990's and remained until 2002, and the CONACYT Chairs Program for Young Researchers (IZQUIERDO, 2010; CASTAÑOS, 2011; DELGADO, 2014; MENDOZA, STANISCIA and ORTÍZ, 2016; PEDONE and IZQUIERDO, 2018).

In the cases we present, several of the women faculty interviewed arrived in the country because of student mobility and looking for a job position. Of the ten research professors, 4 came to Mexico in the 1980's, 2 in the 1990's, and 4 in the 2000's. Some of the elements that we indicate below about each state, one in the central-south and another one located in Mexico's northeastern area, regions where they arrived, as well as each university to which they affiliated to work, show that faculty women arrived with different contexts and institutions, but with coinciding experiences of incorporation and tensions in academic work in several points.

In regards to the resident population in Mexico born abroad, none of the two states, is in the top five, located in the northeast and the central-south respectively. According to data from the National Population Council (CONAPO [for its Spanish acronym]) of 2015, ranking from one to five, those states are Mexico City (13.5%), Baja California (12.7%), Jalisco (10.9%), Chihuahua (7.5%) and Tamaulipas (6.05. %). The northeastern state is ranked in the eighth place with 3.8%, and the state in the central-south region with 0.8%. Although at the national level, the largest international foreign population residing in the country comes from the United States with 69.7%, followed by Spain with 4.2%, there are records that at the regional level, some countries from Central America and South America are also present, among them Guatemala (4.9%), Argentina (1.3%) and Colombia (1.2%), in addition to the Cuban population that is located as the sixth population born abroad residing in the country.

Women faculty came to live in two very different states in Mexico. The state located in the northeast has 4, 653, 458 million inhabitants, of which 2, 333,273 are women and 2, 320,185 are men. This state is known as the most important commercial and industrial center of the country, integrating more than 200 industrial groups, being the manufacturing industry sector one of the most consolidated, concentrating 7.5% of the national GDP (followed by Mexico City and the Mexico State). On the other hand, the state located in the central-south has traditionally been in the agriculture industry, in the 1960's and 1970's it was one of the main producers and exporters of sugarcane and rice. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography in Mexico, that state has 1,777, 227 million inhabitants (918,639 women and 858,588 men) and concentrates 2.1% of the national GDP.

Both states also have differences regarding development in the field of education. The state located in the northeast has an average grade of schooling of 9.8 years, that is to say, that the majority of people aged 15 years and older, has practically the first degree of upper secondary education finished. This indicator is above the national 8.6 and the entity occupies the second position with respect to the 32 states that make up the Mexican Republic. In this sense the state located in the northeast is one of the entities with the most educational advances in the country (ESTRADA, 2012). On the other hand, the state that is located in the central-south region of the country, has an average grade of 8.9 years of education for its population aged 15 years and older, which means that, according to the data collected by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography in Mexico, this population has a basic education level (in Mexico this level is made up of six years of primary school, and three years of secondary school education), below the northeastern state's education level.

These women faculty were affiliated to universities similar in the sense that both institutions belong to the same public education subsystem, and according to the Public Education Secretariat’s internet portal (SEP [for its Spanish acronym]), they were “created by decree of local congresses, under the legal figure of decentralized public bodies. These state institutions develop the functions of teaching, generation and innovative application of knowledge, as well as extension and dissemination of culture”; however, there are also differences among them. While the university in the northeastern region was created in 1933, the university in the central-south was founded two decades later, in 1953, which marked a different development between both, especially in research. In the case of the first institution, the scientific research work was institutionalized in the 1980’s (ESTRADA, 2012), for the second university that process took place a decade later, in the 1990’s. This was one of the elements that made possible research growth and development as well as attraction (and subsequent recruitment) of researchers born outside of Mexico (as well as Mexican researchers). For example one can pinpoint the number of tenured faculty, known as Full Time Professors (PITC [for its Spanish acronym]) who perform researching activities and are members of the National System of Researchers (SNI [for its Spanish acronym]) of the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACyT [for its Spanish acronym]). Currently, the northeastern university has a full-time faculty of 3,358, of which 696 belong to the SNI, 255 are women faculty with tenure and 441 are men faculty with tenure. The central-south university has 503 tenured faculty of which 279 faculty (113 women faculty with tenure, and 166 men faculty with tenure) belong to the SNI.

In both universities affiliated full time professors born abroad come from a large group of countries, among which Cuba and Colombia stand out in that order. Most of this full time faculty is in the exact sciences, followed well below, in the humanities and social sciences. It is worthwhile noting that there are generally more men faculty than women faculty, but by specific field of knowledge and by university, it is perceived that more women faculty are integrated in these last fields in the case of the university of the central-south. It is different in the case of the university in the northeast region for any of the areas of knowledge, Table 2.

Table 2. PITC born abroad ascribes to two public universities

Knowledge areas	Country	women	men	Total	
South Center University					
Agricultural sciences	---	0	0	0	
Health Sciences and Behaviour	Brazil	1	0	1	
	Canada	0	1	1	
	Colombia	1	0	1	
	Cuba	1	0	1	
	Germany	0	3	3	
Exact Sciences and Engineering	Argentina	0	1	1	
	Colombia	1	2	3	
	Cuba	0	3	3	
	France	0	1	1	
	India	1	0	1	
	Morocco	0	1	1	
	Russia	4	4	8	
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	Ukraine	0	1	1	
	Vietnam	0	1	1	
Agropecuaria Sciences	Argentina	1	0	1	
	Brazil	0	1	1	
	Colombia	1	0	1	
	Colombia	2	0	2	
Social and Administrative Sciences	Croatia	1	0	1	
	Cuba	1	0	1	
	Spain	2	1	3	
	England	1	0	1	
Humanities and Education	Argentina	1	0	1	
	Colombia	1	2	3	
	Spain	3	1	4	
	France	1	1	2	
	Guatemala	0	1	1	
	Italy	1	0	1	
	s/d	s/d	1	5	6
Total		26	30	56	
Northeastern University					
Agronomy Sciences	Iran	0	1	1	
Health Sciences and Behaviour	Cuba	0	1	1	
	Colombia	0	1	1	
	Russia	2	3	5	
Exact Sciences and Engineering	Spain	1	2	3	
	Finland	1	0	1	
	Germany	0	1	1	
	Colombia	0	1	1	
	France	0	1	1	
	Panama	1	0	1	
	Cuba	2	0	2	
	Colombia	1	0	1	
	India	0	2	2	
	Bolivia	0	1	1	
	Natural Sciences	Argentina	1	0	1
		Cuba	1	0	1
		Russia	0	1	1
Venezuela		0	1	1	
Spain		0	1	1	
Social and Administrative Sciences	England	1	0	1	
	Germany	1	0	1	
	India	0	1	1	
	Spain	0	3	3	
Humanities and Education	Argentina	0	1	1	
	Venezuela	0	1	1	
	Italy	0	1	1	
	Spain	0	2	2	
	Argentina	0	1	1	
	El Salvador	1	0	0	
	Cuba	1	1	2	
Total		14	27	41	

Source: own elaboration based on the data obtained in both universities.

The previous pages show some of the socio-historical context differences in each of the states, where women faculty came to live and to work. Some similarities were observed in regards to their experiences as well as the strategies they implemented in order to get hired and do academic research in the two Mexican public universities.

Women Faculty Experiences in the Migration Process: Between Tensions and Strategies

Most of the women faculty in this research made the decision to emigrate from their countries of origin to continue with their undergraduate and graduate studies. In some cases, the reason was to find a job position, since they had already obtained a doctorate and came to the country to join as professors at the University in the northeastern Mexican state. In the case of the university in the central-south state, all of women faculty came to Mexico originally to proceed with their studies, especially those who came to do graduate courses; they had a scholarship that made possible their mobility, in some cases both for them and for their partners. These scholarships were granted by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACyT [for its Spanish acronym]); in one case, it was an Inter-American Development Bank scholarship grant:

When I arrived in Mexico I came with a scholarship that I earned along with my husband to study a master's degree, then the doctorate, nobody gave us a scholarship at that time, we searched in Peru, in Ecuador, but they did not give us a scholarship, it was in Mexico where we found this possibility for both of us, we did very well with the scholarships, nobody at that time gave you scholarships, only Mexico (3-bra-unor, 2017, own translation).

One day my director at work at that time comes and tells me "It's your doctorate, this is done for you, but the call closes in 3 days". It was a call of the Inter-American Development Bank, offering three scholarships in all Latin America for the doctorate in Mexico. I applied to it, and they said that the results would come out in 2 months; I did not have any news when the 2 months passed, then I said "I did not get it", but my director told me "Why are you so distrustful, why don't you trust not even in you, or in your abilities? I already see you in Mexico". It was almost three months past the date when I received a letter saying that I had made to the final list, along with a guy, and that both of us were going to compete for Colombia for one of the scholarships. You do not know what it was for me, it gave me self-confidence and then, knowing that I won the scholarship, you do not know what that was [sighs and smiles] (4-col1-ucsur, 2017, own translation).

An attracting factor to come to Mexico was undergraduate studies free tuition, motivation that has also been identified in other studies at the regional level, for example in the case of the Chilean and Colombian students who come to Argentina to do college level studies (SOSA, 2016). Another reason was the possibility of obtaining a scholarship to continue with their graduate studies, as indicated in the two previous quotes, but there were also factors such as political, economic and social violence conflicts that drove out women faculty from their countries of origin. This was the case of Panama, as a result of the "Operation Just Cause" invasion by US military command in 1989, whose reason according to the government of that country, was to capture the then dictator Manuel Antonio Noriega,

accused of drug trafficking. In the case of Colombia, because of the war that the government promoted against drug trafficking that began in the 1980s but that intensified a decade later, convulsing the country and citizens both economically and socially:

I came to study my undergraduate degree because at the time I left high school, at the end of 1987, there were strong political problems in Panama and universities were closed, I came here. My parents supported me and because of the political problems that were in the country, the university was closed, there was no other way to study, it was not possible, I had to choose between staying there without education or coming to study college, and I chose to come here (1-pan -unor, 2017, own translation).

There was a crisis in the eighties, when I left my country there was a very strong political and economic crisis in the South then, you did not look there to say “I’m going to Argentina, to Chile to study”. The south was not an option; people looked elsewhere [...]. Before leaving Colombia I had taken the admission exam to the university and was accepted, but I could not enter because there was a strike, all the time there were strikes because the university was very politicized, it was the time of the 1980’s, there was a lot of susceptibility to social movements and the whole issue of drug trafficking (2-col-ucsur, 2017, own translation).

Students’ international academic mobility can be generally understood as a process in which young people have the possibility of expanding their knowledge and obtaining an academic education, be short or long, in a country other than the one of origin. But it has the main characteristic of being temporary, and students are expected to return to their countries of origin. In case studies that have already been documented (GÉRARD, *et al.*, 2009; FITTIPALDI *et al.*, 2012; TREJO and SIERRA, 2014) international student mobility is usually studied as the first step of a path that may end up as international migration. For the case that concerns us, this was a process that occurred in some of the women faculty’s student life, because leaving their countries of origin was not in the decision-making process, they did not intend to stay permanently in Mexico.

In another study it is pointed out that migrants’ exit contexts from their own countries are a way of knowing the ways in which they will arrive and insert themselves into the “destination” countries (SÁNCHEZ, 2010), when the people who migrate count on social networks or family support that await them and welcome them in the countries of “destination”; it is documented that their entry and insertion in new societies is less stressful. Peña (2015) mentions that migrations that are carried out without documents are not the same as those carried out with institutional support, such as the processing of work permits in government offices between countries or institutions through of which work or academic stays are offered and supported. For example, some of the researchers in this study were hired in their countries of origin. Professors who first had an academic mobility, had already institutional permits, scholarships in process or granted, families or networks of friends who expected them, or peers from their own country with whom had experienced the development of a graduate program. One can note the above elements paved the way for the women faculty’s arrival in the country making their incorporation into the new spaces easier. However, it is the women faculty themselves in this study who offered nuances and contrasts in regards to this assumption, not only in regards with new contexts, academic culture and networks where they were affiliating to, but also in reference to Mexican government

institutions and migration policy actions as they were crucial for their entrance and permanence in the country:

During that process I realized that there was another Colombian girl who was coming to study the same doctoral program as me, my director had accepted a total of 3. I coordinated myself with one of them, so that we arrived together and had the experience together in the same laboratory. She did not manage to finish her studies, but she was my support for a long time and we were not so alone then, we supported each other [...]. I came from a place with many rules, I was highly trained in a center where they had many standards, I worked in laboratories that had security, you entered there with your *little lab coat* and everything was clean, with different codes, everything *just organized* and everything *just clean*. This was the training I had, and when I arrived I said “Oh my God! What is this?” When I enter in the laboratory the first thing I see is a Styrofoam mitochondria flying in the room that one student was throwing to another student; they were playing in the laboratory, it was a mess. Then I said “this is chaos, how is it possible that they have the lab like this?” I used to say my mind frankly, and that's why at first I felt rejected. When I arrived I did not know the Mexican codes, the unwritten rules, all that about saying “doctor”, I used to speak with the informal you to my thesis director. [...]. I asked myself: Why nobody loves me, why do they hate me and why are they watching me like that? I was being very aggressive with them. I came from a training in which people spoke their minds directly, but here it seemed that it was not well seen, [...]. I remember that the first time we had the group seminar, I immediately said “you are wrong, this is done like this and that is done like that, it's easy, it's a piece of cake”, I was very direct, aggressive, later I understood it, *the penny dropped* (5-col2-ucsur, 2017, own translation).

I have another story that is not so pretty, that has to do with immigration, for which I have suffered many hardships because the Mexican immigration system, in my personal experience, is terrible. It has always been an experience of suffering every time I have to do my updates, I have returned home crying, you have to have a lot of persistence and be very strong because it really hurts you. At this moment I am about to have 17 years in the country, you will think that I am already Mexican, but no, due to mistakes of papers and processes all my years living here have been taken away and I am like a newcomer, like a “temporary resident”, as if I were a newcomer, they took everything from me, they took away my 17 years of life here, they erased my life here. Personally, they did not take it from me I have that living experience here, but I feel devastated, a country to which I have given everything in these 17 years; the immigration laws and the processes and procedures that only they understand, they took away all that time on file, and that on a way also affects my rights to which I should have access for all those years living here (3-arg-ucsur, 2017, own translation).

This coincided with the study by Peña (2015) who documented the relationship of qualified Mexican personnel and the existing tension with the control / opening of the labor market in Germany, noting that the people participating in their study were “included because of their documented status and for performing registered or formal work activities; but many are also excluded since that same legal status imposes restrictions on their work activities and on access to the social benefits of the German state” (p.135, own translation). The researcher was not only excluded, but that Mexican immigration authorities in an arbitrary act, “erased” through an institutional action her corresponding right attributions for having lived and worked 17 years in the country.

After graduate studies and the process of entering the labor market in Mexico, women faculty experienced discrimination during the transition from one stage to another. In a couple

of cases this discrimination had nothing to do with their status as foreign nationals, but because of the fact of being women doing academic work, and also because they belonged to opposing academic groups. In some other cases, they narrated experiences in their particular research field, in which they were not able to publish their articles as first authors even though they had started, developed and written the projects due to the fact they did not have the specific job category required to head a research project or be responsible for it:

Office politics attacks began and it was all a gender issue because men faculty were spared from those attacks, they messed with me because I was the only woman faculty. A tense situation arose between the new full time professors and the old full time professors. The new full time professors said that we did not let them do new things, that we were anchored in the old ways and that what the new professors brought was better. But it's not that it was better! It is that they wanted to ignore what we had done, our work. The *problem* was between old and new professors in a sense, but then it came a personal attack, a very strong gender attack, for being a woman, a matter of envy I do not know what of. Women, look, women studying gender and they began the office *politics* attacks towards my person (2-col-ucsur, 2017, own translation).

At that time I was a part time faculty, not a profesor with tenure track, but in my life that was not enough for life and then I worked in a private university, coordinating the production of didactic books. There I stayed for a while, but from that moment I started to work on my own research project. But since I did not belong to any institution as a full-time profesor, nobody funded me anything, but yes, even my projects, my own ideas in articles had to be in the name of other people because they did have tenure. Only until I got here, I won the position [Full-time Professor], then I have the opportunity to put it in my name and fortunately I won the funding to develop my project and now my publications are only in my name (1 -cub-ucsur, 2017, own translation).

In some women faculty's stories, there were elements in which tension is inferred during the labor insertion process, discrimination against them was evident in Mexican academic spaces. In the following quotes, this discrimination is shown due to their status as foreigners in both universities:

Yes, they were difficult, especially the first four years were difficult because I worked part-time in an hourly base. Then I started little by little, I applied to the first tenure track call to get a position, but I had no luck and I had to wait for a second call. The labor issue to join the university was so difficult, everything, customs, forms and then they look at you suspiciously because you are a foreigner, and sometimes you even feel that way, suspicious, but suspicious of what? If I did not do anything [laughs] (2-col-unor, 2017, own translation).

My skin color betrays me, I think "yes, of course, here you can be brunette, but not black" (5-col2-ucsur, 2017, own translation).

When you arrive there is always a rejection, there are very marked stereotypes that make you feel that you are not from here, stereotypes are handled in the sense of rejection. That happens to us Central Americans, here they have made us a negative reputation, that as a foreigner it creates uncomfortable situations, people judge you without knowing you and many times people judge you with disdain (1-pan-unor, 2017, own translation).

In several cases in this study, the status of foreigner in Mexico deepened the discrimination of women faculty, especially those professors who identified themselves as Afro-Colombian, who have built that ethnicity “as part of their revindications and, therefore, of their identity construction” (LAMUS, 2009, p.101, own translation) and also in the case of Central American women faculty, identities that continue to be invisible in the areas of research and teaching in Mexico.

These tensions were mediated by experience, by practice, by knowledge in the academic cultures they entered. Over time, the participants in the study acquired learning experiences that allowed them to put into practice strategies or actions to overcome tense situations. In the following stories they tell us how they constructed and reconstructed some strategies, as well as the ways to implement them in their daily academic life, both in the university in the northeastern region and in the university in the central-south:

Almost nobody knows that I am a foreigner, I no longer speak with an accent, I tell you that because since I arrived they criticized me, they used to correct me “do not say that, this is said like that, here is what you say”. Then I changed, at the beginning I spoke little, later I learned to have almost no accent. I do not know if it was because, I tell you, it was a matter of mimicry for me so that they would not identify me and would not exclude me, so I practiced little by little and now I do not have an accent. (2-col-ucsur, 2017, own translation).

You have to adapt to the way of life, respect the customs, traditions, yes, but you also have to make a difference, try to mediate those two things, be creative to solve the problems, but you learn that as time passes, because at the beginning, in those first years, upon my arrival I had many conflicts with everyone (laughs). [...] I refused to sign a petition from Catholic ladies in my neighborhood regarding the issue of abortion, at that time we had the Pope's visit. [...] Today people have changed their minds a little, people try to be a little more open inside and outside academia, but I think that Mexico is still a conservative society and that is also reflected in the university. I teach the subject History of Women I and II and these issues still have to be discussed carefully, with a lot of tact, at least the first three classes, now I have already learned, in the first classes I go very carefully, then I go direct, it is not that I deviate from my path, I simply learned to be slow but effective (2-col-unor, 2017, own translation).

These women faculty put in place strategies that they themselves were learning, through trial and error, with and in front of others. We identify, for example, the strategy of “mimicry” so as not to be excluded, in this case, to blur her spoken accent to go unnoticed as a foreigner. Here we question whether this strategy was to operate her agency or rather a response to the pressure of a certain culture in Mexico that aims to homogenize what is different. Another strategy was perseverance and had to do with learning to “be creative to solve problems” and the vicissitudes that were presented particularly in academic life. For example, to introduce “very carefully” a teaching subject that can cause tension in the student body that belongs to a conservative university and state in the country. “Slow but effective” were the words another researcher used to name the learning that she obtained in her teaching practice, using pragmatic actions to achieve her objectives. Other types of learning were expressed by “the penny dropped”, an idiom to represent the understanding of diversity and working together with peers and colleagues in a Mexican university.

With the above experiences the women faculty in this study positioned themselves in a creative, pragmatic, persevering and effective way in research and teaching, despite the differences in each state specific context and the level of development in public universities. This can also be seen in the following stories where they show us their developed positioning, effort and work over the years:

When I arrived here, there were no research groups, welcome to bedrock mining work, there was nothing, the researcher's job was not valued. I started working almost alone, little by little and at the end of the road, when I look back, I say "All what I've done!" So, it is comforting to see a complete functioning laboratory with brilliant students doing research, working with them, training them from scratch, it is comforting (4-arg-unor, own translation).

What would I say that is my greatest strength to train students? I have committed myself to increase researchers' training. I develop thesis workshops as a starting point to train researchers. I apply Toulmin's model of argumentation for graduation efficiency. I just wrote an article about that. My colleague with whom I am working tells me: "you are crediting a model for something it does not have". I tried to verify that empirically the model works for graduation efficiency. She says "the model itself is not effective, it's you, the mediator who is making these guys graduate." I must be doing something well in the training of young researchers [smiles] (1-cub-ucsur, 2017, own translation).

I have a great deal of personal satisfaction that we are the first faculty to promote that girls and boys study exact sciences since childhood. I started that program since 2003. I have students who were influenced by that children's science program. [...] Another project is that of Women in Science, born in 2013 [...], that year we assisted 1,200 high school students, that project seeks to change the perspective of life of young women, that they can see that there is a world well beyond high school and if they wish, they can pursue a career in science (1-pan-unor, 2017, own translation).

Although the question to women faculty was in regards to their own research, most of them focused their stories on their young researchers' training. This does not mean that the interviewees are not doing research work, as can be seen in the first table. Eight out of the ten interviewed women faculty are recognized in the National System of Researchers (SNI [for its Spanish acronym]); one of them, (4-arg- unor), at level 3, the highest level. We think that this focus could be related to the own women faculty's commitment and social responsibility. In Mexico, women faculty not only carry out research and disseminate knowledge, teaching is one of the most tangible contributions that was appreciated in their stories, whose cornerstone is students' training in science.

Final Considerations

A new *wave* of migrants arrived in Mexico since the 1980's, but mainly in the 1990's and the 2000's, made up of groups from various countries of the world. The difference with the previous decades was that it was not only exiles, they were economic migrations, for purposes of studying and working. This heterogeneity and diversity could be noticed in the cases that we present in this article.

The interviewed scholars's reasons for their mobility and migration were due to economic crises, lack of employment and social and political conflicts in which their countries were immersed. In several cases, the reasons were for the desire to continue with their academic and professional training. In the study, some elements that could influence their migration experiences were identified, for example, obtaining a scholarship, the existence of family networks and the support of friends, the institutional and economic reasons and resources that had (or not) at the moment of departure from their countries of origin. The status of foreign women faculty in Mexico and the discrimination they experienced in this process were visible as elements of tension, especially those who named themselves as Afro-Colombian and Central American. Mimicry, creativity, pragmatism and perseverance were some of the strategies put in place to try to cope with these tensions. They tried these strategies despite several factors: differences in the socioeconomic development of the states and the level of research development in the public universities where they work, and also, their gender status for the stigma stereotypes for being women. These strategies should not be left to the individual. Knowing the migration process experiences of South American women faculty (or from any other origin) in Mexico, would allow the Mexican government to design and implement public policies on immigration for the attraction, incorporation and development of professors who wish to work and live in the country.

Finally, we want to point out that whether academic mobility leads young people to migrate permanently or not, the direction of these mobilities as well as the meanings and impacts in the reconfiguration of qualified international migrations is a pending issue to be explored in the future. The so-called *South-North* directionality of qualified migrations continues to have as its main destination spaces in American academia. However, we agree with Pedone and Izquierdo (2018) that since the late 1990's and clearly two decades later, there is a reconfiguration of migrations in the global South at specific moments and particular international historical conjunctures, whose central framework is the development / absence of public policies on this matter by governments.

With this study we can affirm that the South also *moves* towards the South. But more studies are needed in our South American, Latin American and Caribbean countries where this type of flows and movements be documented and analyzed. The focus should be placing of women faculty participation, as well as the impact that this type of flows has for the region, so that other forms of approaching the study of qualified migrations can be approached in order to understand those processes from public universities in the global South.

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