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Incidences of Return Migration: International Students from Cape Verde

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Introduction

Jacqueline V., a City Councilman for Youth and Culture from the small island nation of Cape Verde, left his home country, traveled to the United States for an extended period of time, studied at a large University in Massachusetts, and earned a degree there. “People in Santa Cruz see me as a role model because I went to the U.S. and studied at Bridgewater”, Jacqueline told researchers. “Bridgewater State University has a great reputation here.”

International students like Jacqueline have, over recent decades, become a highly visible presence on the campuses of colleges and universities across the United States, and academic institutions are proud of the international students who study there, highlighting on reports, in recruiting literature, and alumni news venues the number of international students on campus and the various countries from which they originate. In addition to providing diversity and other academic and intellectual positives, these students reportedly lend depth to in-class discussions and give an important and often very different point of view than that provided by students native to the host country (Sato & Hodge, 2015). Oosterbeek & Webink, (2009) have speculated that the trend for students to leave their home countries for international study will continue to grow, will increase the human capital of all students involved, and is certain to create international networks that will lead to a better understanding of different cultures and greater global unity.

Many factors have contributed to this rise in the number of students studying abroad. Gribble (2008) has noted that the undersupply of universities in many developing countries has resulted in an inability to satisfy the rising demand in those countries for post-secondary education and the human capital required to move those countries forward. Historical and cultural ties influence the ease with which transnational education can occur, and many international students are choosing to study abroad in countries where there exists a former colonial relationship, or a historical relationship that, while perhaps more economic than colonial, has been in place for centuries. However complicated, these relationships ease the complexities of foreign study, often allowing students to gain benefit from a familiarity with the language and culture of the host country (Dumont, 2006). Cultural beliefs have led families and students in many developing countries to expect that foreign study will confer professional and business advantages upon those able to take advantage of it, the rising capacity in communication technology around the world has made studying abroad more accessible, and the growing willingness of foreign universities to provide students from developing countries with academic scholarships and grants for living and studying abroad continues to make transnational study financially more cost effective. (Gribble, 2008; Dumont 2006).

Portes (2009) explains that with this increasing emphasis on globalization, the idea of transnational study has become even more attractive, providing international students with not only opportunities to improve their skills, education, and experiences abroad, but also allowing

them to contribute to their home country through remittances, cultural exchanges, and especially, newly acquired knowledge. Bloch (2017), however, adds, “[t]he benefits of highly skilled migration for sending countries will depend, in part, on whether migration is permanent or cyclical and whether diasporas maintain their transnational links over time and space.” (p. 1511)

This idea of cyclical or circular migration is an important one. Since Adams’ (1968) early work around what has become known as “brain drain”, authors and researchers have studied the effects of students studying, working, and permanently remaining outside of their home countries. Recent authors continue to warn of concerns around the loss of these newly educated and/or experienced international students who study internationally but do not intend to return home (Bratsberg, 1995; Soon, Jan-Jan, 2012; Grecu & Titan, 2016), noting the many profoundly negative consequences linear migration has on the source country.

Fortunately for these source countries, however, this form of linear migration, that is a unidirectional and final movement of individuals from a developing country to a developed country is, as other models begin to grow in popularity, becoming a less predominant model of migration. Constant & Zimmerman (2011) write that while migration has historically been seen as this type of permanent move from one’s home country to a more developed one, other types of migration are being increasingly undertaken by individuals seeking experience and education outside their place of birth. Constant & Zimmerman define these different types of migration as *repeated* or *circular migration*, a type of migration where migrants continually move back and forth between their home country and another; and *return migration*, migration from one’s home country to another, (most often a more developed country), where they live for a period of time, work, visit relatives, attend school, earn high school diplomas or college degrees, and finally return to live and work in their home country. Return migration results in a *permanent* return to the country of origin, where migrants re-establish themselves and their lives, applying their newly acquired skills, cultural awareness, experience and knowledge to bettering conditions back home.

The Current Study

Located in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, U.S.A., Bridgewater State University (BSU), with over 10,000 students studying in graduate and undergraduate programs, and more than 70,000 alumni, strongly supports international teaching, learning, and university partnerships,. Because of the high number of Cape Verdeans living within BSU’s service region, and close individual ties between Cape Verde and many administrators, faculty, and students at BSU, in 2006, Bridgewater State University (then Bridgewater State College) decided to help establish the University of Cabo Verde in the capital city of Praia, on the island of Santiago, in the Republic of Cape Verde. Shortly thereafter, Bridgewater State University signed an international partnership agreement with the University of Cabo Verde (UniCV), and since 2008, BSU has been awarding scholarships to Cape Verdean undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Cabo Verde to attend and engage in academic study at Bridgewater State University. Some of these Cape Verdean international students have taken part in undergraduate exchange programs, some have earned Master’s degrees in education from BSU, some have earned M.A.T.’s in Teaching English as a Second Language, and others have earned Bachelor’s and more advanced degrees in business and other academic areas.

Given the level of commitment and cost required of both institutions (i.e. BSU and UniCV) to develop and maintain the above scholarship programs, and because no formal follow

up on these Cape Verdean international students has ever been conducted, a study examining the impact these scholarships may have had on the life and vocations of these alumni was undertaken. The overall goals of this study were to assess the success of these scholarship programs, to examine aspects of sustainability, and to recommend change or continuance of the current constructs, in order to advance a discussion on the quality, effectiveness, and impact of the current scholarship programs offered by Bridgewater State University to students from the University of Cabo Verde, including specific program strengths and suggestions for improvement.

Rationale:

Bridgewater State University records indicate that between 2008 and 2017, when the scholarship program was temporarily halted, 18 students from Cape Verde received scholarships for BSU's one-semester undergraduate exchange program and 34 received scholarships and graduated with Master's degrees from a variety of BSU graduate programs. While a very small fraction of these individuals have remained in the U.S. to continue their studies or seek permanent employment and/or residency, 92% of these scholarship recipients have returned permanently to Cape Verde and are pursuing a professional agenda in their home country.

No systematic follow-up studies on these scholarship recipients have been completed since their graduation from BSU and their return to Cape Verde, including documentation of the profession in which they're currently engaged; where in Cape Verde they're currently working; whether their experiences at BSU have improved their own individual or professional life-space; whether global engagement and academic learning at BSU has had a positive impact on their careers and/or their lives or the lives of other Cape Verdeans; and especially, whether these students have actualized what they learned at Bridgewater State University to impact economic, educational, or social conditions in Cape Verde

As noted, transnational educational protocols with the Republic of Cape Verde are intended to capacitate graduate and undergraduate students with the skills and knowledge required to transform the national context. Through such protocols with the University of Cabo Verde, Bridgewater State University has received and trained dozens of candidates in a wide variety of areas, ranging from computer science, to education, to public management. Through answers to the questions below, gleaned from the data obtained via returned surveys, focus group discussions, and visits with graduates in their professional roles, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact and effectiveness of BSU scholarship programs for individuals from Cape Verde. In doing so, answers to the research questions below will actively contribute to the betterment of the transnational protocols that exist between Bridgewater State University and the University of Cabo Verde.

Based upon the above, a review of the literature, and the information needed by the two universities, the following research questions were created:

1. When students from Cape Verde applied to one of the Bridgewater State University scholarship programs, what was their intent, to set up a professional career in the U.S. after graduation or to return to Cape Verde and establish a professional career back in their home country?

2. Do students from Cape Verde who complete graduate and exchange programs at BSU feel the process for applying to one of these programs was easy, confusing, or extremely difficult?
3. Do students from Cape Verde who complete graduate and exchange programs at BSU feel the transition process from Cape Verde to the U.S. is easy, confusing, or extremely difficult?
4. To what extent have graduates and exchange program completers of the various Bridgewater State University programs found the education they received at BSU to be effective in producing new knowledge?
5. What specific skills or topics of knowledge learned during their program at BSU did graduates and exchange program completers find particularly helpful when they returned to Cape Verde?
6. What new opportunities have been generated for graduates and exchange program completers as a result of their participation in BSU's transnational educational protocols?
7. To what extent have graduates and exchange program completers been able to implement knowledge acquired during their BSU studies in their professional positions in Cape Verde?
8. What professional challenges were encountered by graduates and exchange program completers upon returning to Cape Verde?
9. How have graduates and exchange program completers been able to use their new knowledge, given the opportunities and/or constraints extant in Cape Verde?

Procedure

In order to examine the above questions, a list of all students from the University of Cabo Verde who participated in any scholarship program at Bridgewater State University from 2008-2017 (not just those who return-migrated), including their home addresses in Cape Verde and their current email addresses and/or CV cell phone numbers was obtained. These individuals were sent an email describing the study and its importance, along with an attached survey for them to fill out and return. In addition, volunteers were solicited to form a focus group, to meet face-to-face and help "flesh out" the responses to items on the survey. Six individuals from the graduate and undergraduate exchange programs volunteered to serve as focus group members.

Researchers then traveled to Cape Verde for one week to meet with the focus group and connect with, in their professional roles, as many of the scholarship recipients as possible, to ask pertinent questions around specific BSU program strengths and weaknesses, and to record (if any exist) their professional accomplishments after graduation.

For simplicity, subjects in the study have been identified only by their initials.

Results

Survey Questions and Responses (from a survey return rate of 27% (14/52))

*When students from Cape Verde applied to one of the BSU scholarship programs, was their intent to **set up a professional career in the U.S.** after graduation or to **return permanently to Cape Verde** and establish a professional career back home?*

Survey findings indicate the vast majority (over 90%) of responding graduates and exchange program completers planned *from the beginning to return* to Cape Verde after the completion of their studies at Bridgewater State University and to establish a professional career back home.

*Do students from Cape Verde who complete graduate and exchange programs at BSU feel the **process for applying** to one of these programs was easy, confusing, or extremely difficult?*

The data here splits evenly between respondents, with 50% indicating the process was easy, due to the hands on assistance they received from BSU and/or UniCV, and the other 50% indicating that the process was confusing, because they received little or no substantive support and/or guidance from UniCV. Interestingly, the more recently the graduates and exchange program completers applied to the scholarship programs, the more likely they were to indicate little or no substantive support and/or guidance from UniCV. Graduates and exchange program completers most often mentioned the process for providing necessary documents to BSU as being the clearest part of applying to BSU's programs and the process for obtaining a visa as the most confusing.

*Do students from Cape Verde who complete graduate and exchange programs at BSU feel the **transition process** from Cape Verde to the U.S. is easy, confusing, or extremely?*

Most respondents indicated that because of the support they received from Bridgewater State University, the transition process from Cape Verde to the U.S. went smoothly, mentioning specifically BSU's orientation process, the opportunity to connect and live with Cape Verdean classmates, and being met at the airport by BSU representatives as reasons. Approximately 30% of the respondents indicated the transition process was confusing, citing as the main reason, a lack of information from UniCV.

*To what extent have graduates and exchange program completers of the various BSU programs found the education they received at BSU to be **effective in producing new knowledge**?*

All respondents (100%) indicated that their program of studies at BSU was positive, with graduates and exchange program completers indicating that the scholarship program expanded their global experiences and greatly improved their English language skills. Other positives noted by respondents included improving their skills as students, adding to their professional development, and helping them build more professional academic research abilities.

*What **specific skills or topics of knowledge** learned during their program at BSU did graduates and exchange program completers find particularly helpful when they returned to Cape Verde?*

When responding to this question, graduates and exchange program completers understandably noted gained-knowledge that fell within the domains of their various programs. Those in teaching programs (which were the majority of students returning surveys) indicated new knowledge and skills acquired as: "new teaching approaches", "effective use of the library", "use

of technology in the classroom”, and “differentiated instruction”. Those in other programs indicated such new knowledge and skills gained as “the importance of field study”, “organizational behavior”, and “human resource management”. All respondents indicated newly gained knowledge and skills in “relating to different cultures” or “learning to adapt”. Overwhelmingly and most interestingly, all respondents indicated the most helpful knowledge gained and skills learned in their programs were things like, “teamwork”, “goal setting”, “critical thinking”, “open-mindedness”, “confidence”, and “leadership”, all part of what educators refer to as *the hidden curriculum* (Wren, 1999), i.e. things that students ultimately learn from taking part in an educational process, but are not necessarily directly intended by program instructors.

*What **new opportunities** have been generated by graduates and exchange program completers as a result of their participation in BSU’s transnational educational protocols?*

Respondents indicate that since graduating or exiting as exchange students from BSU programs they have obtained various professional positions, including a Cape Verde military instruction officer, part time and full time professors at the University of Cabo Verde and Cape Verde’s Institute of Pedagogy, translators, becoming the founder of a private English Language School, a director of the English Language Institute at the University of Cabo Verde, authors of a national English language textbook for 5th graders, the director of marketing for Coca Cola, two city counselors, and others.

*To what extent have graduates and exchange program completers been **able to implement knowledge acquired** during their BSU studies in their professional positions in Cape Verde?*

All but two graduates and exchange program completers noted that they have been able to implement knowledge acquired during their BSU studies in their professional positions in Cape Verde. Respondents noted that they used specific tools and skills to improve their job performance. They mentioned specifically that they’ve been able to introduce new programs in communication and education, new teaching methodologies in secondary and university classrooms, and grow as a professional, securing better jobs as a result of their studies at Bridgewater State University.

*What **professional challenges** were encountered by graduates and exchange program completers **upon returning** to Cape Verde?*

Respondents noted that the challenges they faced when they returned to Cape Verde fell into two categories: a lack of resources to help implement the changes they wanted to introduce and the reluctance of managers, administrators and/or colleagues to accept change.

How have graduates and exchange program completers been able to utilize their new knowledge, given the opportunities and/or constraints extant in Cape Verde?

As noted, graduates and exchange program completers responded that while change can sometimes be difficult, using what they learned at Bridgewater State University, combined with vision and professional persistence, growth, change, and positive movement forward can occur in Cape Verde.

Professional-Role Visit and Interview Responses

As a final component of the project, in order to flesh out information from the surveys, researchers met individually with graduates of BSU's Master's Degree scholarship programs for Cape Verdeans to discuss the above data, to discuss BSU/UniCV scholarship programs in greater detail, and to observe first-hand what these graduates have accomplished as professionals living and working in Cape Verde. While these individuals granted permission for their information to be revealed for this study, for the sake of simplicity, they will be identified as PB, LL, JV, RF, HM and ZV. A description of their professional roles at the time of the study and some individual comments from them are presented below.

PB: After graduating with a Master's Degree from BSU, PB returned to Cape Verde and taught English at Amilcar Cabral Secondary School in Assomada, Santiago, Cape Verde. From there, he became an English Language professor at the University of Cabo Verde, eventually helping to establish and being appointed director of UniCV's Dana Mohler-Faria English Language Institute. During the interview, PB indicated he owed his success in building a successful and important career to what he learned at Bridgewater State University.

LL: After graduating from BSU and at the time of the study, LL was teaching in the English Language Department at the University of Cabo Verde. She has worked closely with the aforementioned Dana Mohler-Faria English Language Institute and indicated to interviewers that she has used what she learned in her Master's Degree program at BSU to improve her university teaching, including integrating the Dana Mohler-Faria English Language Institute into the courses she teaches at the University of Cabo Verde. In addition, LL joined with two other BSU graduates, HM and ZV, to write and publish a 5th grade English Language textbook, commissioned by the Cape Verde Ministry of Education. LL also planned two 1-week workshops for CV teachers on Formative Assessment and Differentiated Instruction, two important topics she learned about during her studies at BSU. During her interview, LL noted that since graduating from BSU she is working "to change the teacher-centered approach (that is widely used in Cape Verde)." She told interviewers, "I want to get close to (my students) so I can understand how they work, how they think, their background... so I can make the material comprehensible and understandable to them."

JV: JV earned his Master's Degree at BSU, taught briefly at UniCV, and was appointed City Councilman for Youth and Culture in the region of Santa Cruz. As a Councilman, JV was charged with bringing new ideas and opportunities for youth to a region of 26 communities and approximately 30,000 people. JV noted that some of the best things he took from his education at BSU were what he called "transferable skills", i.e. skills like leadership, the importance of community, and the importance of developing activities for youth. He is most proud of his accomplishments in the area of youth housing and the development of a youth center that provides space where teenagers can go during their free time to use computers, to work on homework, to get job training and to find out about work opportunities. JV remarked during his interview, "I like getting my hands dirty... with the people, so as to make things happen. I believe that is the influence of Bridgewater. Making things happen, getting your hands dirty and working as a team."

RF: Similar to JV, after completing his Master's Degree in Education at Bridgewater State University, RF taught at the University of Cabo Verde and was afterwards appointed as City Councilor for Work, Infrastructure, and Transportation, in the region of Assomada. At the time of the interview, RF had been in that position for only 1.5 years and had already more than doubled the number of building projects completed and in progress. He credited BSU for giving

him knowledge and skills in what he calls “Servant Leadership” and in an interview with researchers he mentioned how Bridgewater State University’s motto “Not to be ministered unto, but to minister” has become the driving force behind his administration, in a government where, he said, “the opposite is often the case”. He noted specifically how his entire Bridgewater experience instilled in him the importance of group decision making, active listening, and modeling, “all of which favor human relationships, group dynamics, and positive accomplishments.” RF told interviewers, “I took the leadership skills I observed at Bridgewater and when I accepted this position, I used them as my foundation, favoring ‘people work’ over ‘paperwork’.”

ZV: Upon returning to Cape Verde, ZV was an English language translator and taught as a professor of English at the University of Cabo Verde. Later, she opened a private school whose mission is to teach English to the community. The school, the English Language Learning Institute of Cape Verde, addresses the English language learning needs of the entire community, including children, teenagers, and adults (website: ellev.cv). As noted above, ZV joined with LL and HM to write and publish a 5th grade English Language textbook, commissioned by the Cape Verde Ministry of Education.

Specific Recommendations for Bridgewater State University and the University of Cabo Verde:

The findings of this preliminary study show that Bridgewater State University’s relationship with the University of Cabo Verde and BSU’s offering of graduate degree and undergraduate exchange programs to students from UniCV is clearly building capacity, and the results indicate that these scholarship programs to Cape Verde students should continue, though some slight changes in policies, procedures, and intended outcomes might be considered.

One of the first suggestions proffered by graduates and exchange program participants is that the two universities, UniCV and BSU, show potential applicants the benefits of applying for these programs at BSU, *especially in terms of the impact* returning graduates of the programs have had on Cape Verde, its institutions, and its communities. They suggested that UniCV and BSU clarify the goals of the relationship, as well as the specific roles of each institution, roles for which they should somehow be held accountable.

The focus group requested that Bridgewater State University help the graduates and exchange program completers establish a Cape Verde chapter of the BSU Alumni Association. Focus group participants asked for help from BSU on this, specifically around the process by which alumni associations ought to be formed, how they should ultimately be structured, and the requirements for establishing an international alumni association. In addition, the focus group recommended that an increased variety of BSU programs be offered to incoming students from Cape Verde: in teaching, English language learning, business, finance, and other areas of specific importance to Cape Verde and its people.

Program graduates and completers suggested the University of Cabo Verde attempt to be more informative and involved in the scholarship program than they have in the past and that UniCV consider creating a knowledgeable and involved Liaison Office for students applying to study abroad, especially those studying at BSU. They recommended the University explain up front that while the potential for working at UniCV might exist for some after they complete their degrees at Bridgewater State University, graduates should not depend on that happening, and should prepare themselves to work in a professional capacity elsewhere. The focus group

suggested UniCV work to develop and provide to potential applicants a list of professional positions available in Cape Verde that are not in teaching or school administration, but exist in other vocational or professional domains. They also recommended that the University of Cabo Verde work to assist new graduates in obtaining these jobs.

Conclusion

As noted above, BSU has, since 2008, been awarding scholarships to Cape Verdean undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Cabo Verde to attend, engage in academic study, and graduate from Bridgewater State University. To date, 52 Cape Verdean men and women have received scholarships, attended semester abroad programs, and graduated with degrees from BSU. The results of the current study show these scholarship programs as being demonstrably successful, and support their continuance, with minor adjustments as described above.

In addition, two outstanding conclusions emerged from the research: specifically, the importance of the “hidden curriculum” (Semper and Blasco, 2018; Wren, 1999) and the strong desire of scholarship program completers to return to Cape Verde and build and implement a life-long professional agenda there, instead of in the U.S.

Hidden Curriculum

In their article on the implicit inclusion of the hidden curriculum in courses and other experiences in higher education, Semper and Blasco (2018) define hidden curriculum as “what is implicit and embedded in educational experiences in contrast with the formal statements about curricula and the surface features of educational interaction” (p.482). Beyond content, college students learn ways to get along socially, to interact with others, to think, to respond, to lead at times and to follow at others, to collaborate, to weigh ideas and to come to conclusions. These are most often unacknowledged, sometimes subliminal, and not directly taught. Scholarship and program completers surveyed and interviewed for this study repeatedly mentioned hidden curriculum constructs as some of the best “take-aways” from their time spent at Bridgewater State University.\

All subjects indicated newly gained abilities in “relating to different cultures” or “learning to adapt”. Others noted from their time at BSU they internalized the importance of teamwork, goal setting, critical thinking, open-mindedness, confidence, and leadership. One participant told researchers, “Some of the things I took note of in the U.S. that I liked a lot... first there was the issue of punctuality... but also commitment to your work... and this is something that I learned and brought back with me.” (JV)

Intent to Return to Cape Verde

While some publications note involvement between the United States and Cabo Verde going back to the 1600’s, according to the United States Department of State (2019), the United States and Cabo Verde began to establish close connections with each other during the growth of the whaling industry in the 1700’s. Whaling ships intersected with the islands of Cabo Verde in search of supplies and workers, and many Cape Verdeans left Cabo Verde in the employ of those ships, emigrating permanently to the U.S., and building lives and families there. This tradition of emigration has continued into the 21st century, with Cape Verdeans concentrating primarily in

the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and resulting in a New England Cape Verdean diaspora that has been said to rival the Cape Verdean population on the islands themselves. (United States Department of State, 2019)

According to the Boston Planning and Development Agency (Bostonplans.org, 2017), 65,000 Cape Verdeans live within a 50-mile radius of Bridgewater State University, primarily in BSU's service region cities of Boston, Brockton, Taunton, and New Bedford. The centuries-long historical connection discussed above, along with this high concentration of country men and women within a short drive of each other, would seem to be a strong attractant for permanent migration, keeping newly educated and degreed Cape Verdeans within the boundaries of Massachusetts. Writing about transnational migration, Levitt & de la Dehesa (2003) explain reasons for this, noting in the final analysis that "Heightened globalization enables some and pushes other migrants into maintaining strong ties to their countries of origin even as they are incorporated into the countries that receive them" (p. 3). The literature demonstrates that Cape Verdeans and Cape Verdean Americans in the BSU service region hold powerful bonds with both the U.S. and Cape Verde, held together by history, tradition, food, music, language, and more, making one finding of this study, i.e. that 92% of the responding graduates and exchange program completers planned *from the beginning to return* to Cape Verde after the completion of their studies at Bridgewater State University and to establish a professional career *back home* as particularly important.

Bratsberg (1995) describes the migration model of Borjas (1987, 1992) which predicts that those migrants most likely to stay in a host country will be determined by the value placed on learned skills in the source country as compared to that in the host. If the source country values skills at an even greater level than the host country, international students are more likely to return home. Bratsberg's (1995) own study found that differences in economic and political conditions in source countries explains why international students may be more likely to return to their home country, that is, if it values highly their investments in education. Subjects in this current study indicated they felt that their achievements would be greatly valued in Cape Verde.

Judite Nascimento, then Reitor at the University of Cabo Verde told researchers, "(One BSU graduate) at this moment is developing a program with African partners, all because he has these skills which he acquired there at BSU and has brought back to Cape Verde. (Another), who was one of the students who attended BSU, she developed an interesting program, that was originally a radio program, called UNICV KIDS. She brings children from various entities, including agencies that care for at-risk youth, and during the summer, she develops a summer program for children. (What she learned at BSU) has had a *significant* impact."

When asked why, after receiving a Master's Degree at Bridgewater State University as an international student, he returned home to Cape Verde to begin his professional life, Jacqueline V., who we met at the beginning of this article, replied, "A lot of people have asked me, 'Why didn't you stay in the United States?' I said, 'I want to make a difference. I can make a difference here (at home). In the United States I would be just one more person. Here in Cabo Verde, especially in my community... I will make a *lot* of difference'."

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