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South-South Student Mobility: International Students from Portuguese-Speaking Africa and Brazil

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As a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, student mobility involves diverse actors, interests and rationalities. Following the globalization of education markets, universities and other higher education providers have been implementing strategies to recruit and attract international students, not least to increase their revenues and levels of internationalization (Findlay et al., 2017). Likewise, destination countries acknowledged the advantages of hosting international students: financial benefits, an increase in the skilled worker pool and improvements in diplomatic relations (Riaño et al., 2018). Origin countries meanwhile identify student mobility as means through which talented individuals can become qualified via moving to countries with well-developed higher education system (Findlay, 2010). And students themselves, and their families, also recognize the potential impact of an international diploma on employability, making them instrumental in establishing educational mobility imperatives at tertiary level (Alberts & Hazen, 2005; Holloway et al., 2012).

The combination of these actors' decision-making, a confluence of discourses about the meaning and value of student mobility and the backdrop of global inequalities in the distribution of educational opportunities helps explain why students have often travelled from the Global South to the Global North, accounting for the high number of studies on movement to Anglophone countries and Europe; in particular, Asian students to Anglophone destinations (Riaño et al., 2018; Waters et al., 2011). And despite recent engagement with a broader range of spatial contexts (see, e.g., Chankseliani, 2016; França et al., 2018; Kritz, 2015, 2018; Wilken

& Dahlberg, 2017), what we know about South-South student mobility remains limited (Daniel, 2014; Eyebiyi & Mazzella, 2014; Nogueira & Ramos, 2014; Rico & Emilia, 2015). To address this oversight, this chapter looks at South-South student flows, focusing on the connections generated through colonial legacies. More specifically, the aim is to look at student mobility in Lusophone space: the political, economic, cultural and symbolic space formed by the Portuguese speaking countries Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, East Timor, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Portugal and San Tomé and Principe (Baganha, 2009; França et al., 2018).

One example we shall consider concerns the University for International Integration of the Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB), located in a small town in the Brazilian north-east region, Redenção. It is a public and federal university that in addition to serving Brazilian students also promotes an innovative student mobility programme, aimed at students from East Timor and African Portuguese language speaking countries. Hence, it fosters South-South ISM, contributing to diversify the student mobility landscape. Our research identifies the main features of the experience these students have at UNILAB, considering the specificity of South-South mobility and colonial ties between the countries involved. More specifically, we look at the motivations of these students to choose UNILAB, the role of social and family networks in the mobility of these students, how social class shapes this flow and students' expectations after finishing their undergrad courses.

To unveil answer to these questions, 35 in depth interviews with African Portuguese speaking students enrolled at UNILAB were conducted, complemented with intensive but short-term participant observation at UNILAB during April and May 2018. Theoretically, we follow other studies in adopting a Bourdieusian analytic framework (see, e.g., Findlay et al., 2012; Holloway et al., 2012; Waters, 2006), with student mobility viewed as a strategy, by both

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students and their families, to foster upward mobility and enhance social status and privilege through the acquisition of valuable social and cultural capital.

International Student Mobility in the Lusophone space

As a particular form of migration, international student mobility is shaped by a variety of factors: personal ambitions and interests, networks and family influence (Cairns & Smyth, 2011; Mol & Timmerman, 2014), perception of the destination country, cost of living, reported quality of university, career chances and labour market development level (Beine, Noël, & Ragot, 2014; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). Markers of difference, including gender, race and social class, also come into play (King & Sondhi, 2016; Lee & Rice, 2007), as does the encompassing macro and meso context, especially official migration policies (Findlay, 2010; Riaño, Mol, & Raghuram, 2018). We also need to consider political and cultural issues, such as colonial ties and shared language (Boerjesson, 2017; França et al., 2018; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014), students' own personal desires and interests (Abuosi & Abor, 2015; Cairns, 2017; Carlson, 2013; Prazeres, 2013; Waters et al., 2011) and, as King and Sondhi (2017, have argued, how gender norms, relations of privilege, hierarchies and power inequalities within the family and social context shape women's ability to pursue a degree abroad.

In this discussion, we are particularly concerned with how asymmetric power relations between former metropole and colonies have an impact on student mobility practices. Higher education institutions in the ex-colonies tend to follow a curriculum that mirrors the one of the former metropole; however, those located in the colonized territories tend to enjoy less prestige, have fewer globally recognized professors and less modern infrastructure (Boerjesson, 2017). Hence, a diploma obtained in the former metropole is still seen as an advantage in the ex-colonies' local labour markets and valued more by society in general. In addition, higher education in the old metropole tends to offer students from ex-colonies special treatment:

relatively open entrance systems, reduced fees, exceptional visa policies, etc. to increase attractivity (França et al., 2018). And more generally, a shared colonial past produces relational ties – common language, cultural proximity, immigrant stock – that contributes towards increasing the old metropole's appeal as a destination for students from former colonies (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014).

Although there are factors that are transversal to most mobile students, Eyebiyiy and Mazzella (2014) highlight the significant differences that exist in the determinants, logics, rationalities and modalities, as well as socio-demographic profiles, personal motivations and study trajectories, of international students from the Global South. For instance, they stress international relations issues; for example, visa restrictions tend to limit destination choices. Prazeres (2013) has shown how students from the Global South tend to practice a form of degree-seeking mobility oriented towards developed countries, looking for qualifications that they cannot obtain in their local educational environment. Furthermore, these students are strongly driven by economic factors and human capital demands from their home country, meaning that they will search for countries where they can find better working opportunities and salaries (Wei, 2013; Zheng, 2014).

Until recently, international student mobility in the Lusophone space has received limited attention; however interest in the topic is increasing, and in the last decade, its flows have become more intense and visible (Fonseca et al., 2016; França et al., 2018). While under-discussed in comparison with Anglophone student migration (França & Padilla, 2018; Nada & Araújo, 2018), as Lusophone countries systematically increase their investment in higher education and student mobility, the imperative to study this phenomenon grows. Brazil and Portugal are most prominent, having relatively solid higher education systems, with some universities now appearing in international rankings and many institutions investing in internationalization (Horta, 2009; Laus & Morosini, 2005). Angola, Equatorial Guinea and

Mozambique are also improving the organizational structures of their universities, while Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, St. Tomé and Principe and East-Timor, with their more recently created university system, have a longer path ahead (França et al., 2018; Sani & Oliveira, 2015; Silva, 2012).

Student mobility to Brazil has grown significantly in the last decade, if still limited (Ojima, et al., 2014). In 2017/2018, international students represented 0.19 per cent of enrolments at Brazilian higher education institutions; in Portugal, for the same period, this number was 4.4% (DGEEC, 2018; INEP, 2018). Initiatives to attract students to Brazil can be traced back to 1965, when the Programme Student-Management Agreement (PEC-G) was created by the Brazilian government (Leal & Moraes, 2018). This was the first official programme, which still exists, that sponsors students from developing countries with which Brazil maintains cooperation protocols to complete their undergraduate education in a Brazilian higher education institution. It enforces the mandatory return to the home country after the end of the course to ensure a contribution to the development of the country of origin (Leal & Moraes, 2018). The South-South cooperation nature of the programme promotes mainly the mobility of African students to the country, and between 1965 and 2012, 4,258 African students participated (Amaral, 2013).

Student mobility to Brazil was also shaped by its diplomatic relations with other Latin American countries. For instance, in 2000, as a member of the Association of Universities of the Montevideo Group - a university network formed by 28 public universities from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay - Brazil joined the ESCALA estudantil mobility programme (Nogueira & Ramos, 2014). Its main goal is to foster regional cooperation through student mobility and to promote a high quality international education for the enrolled students. Furthermore, in 2006, the Southern Common Market, MERCOSUR - an economic and political regional block formed by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay - launched the Mercosur

Regional Academic Mobility Programme (MARCA), a cooperation scheme that fosters student mobility among its member states (Sandoval & Krawczyk, 2012).[1] The signing of an increased number of academic and bilateral cooperation agreements between Brazil and Portugal in 2000 also translated into an intensification of the flow of Portuguese students to Brazilian universities (França et al., 2018). The economic crises that hit Portugal in 2008, aggravated in the period 2011-2014 with the implementation of austerity measures, contributed in particular to many Portuguese students seeking to leave for different opportunities abroad, including Brazil (Cerdeira et al., 2016).[2]

UNILAB: History and Key Facts

UNILAB was created in 2008 in the context of the Brazilian international relations expansion during the second mandate of President Lula da Silva (UNILAB, 2017). For historical, geographical, political and symbolic reasons, the university's main building and first campus are situated in the north-eastern state of Ceará, in Redenção a town 72 kilometers from the stat capital, Fortaleza. Redenção was the first town in Brazil to abolish slavery in 1883 and Ceará is strategically positioned between Europe and Africa. Two other campuses were opened in 2012 in Acarape, a town next to Redenção, and in 2013, another two campus in São Francisco do Conde, in the state of Bahia (UNILAB, 2017).

Like the PEC-G programme, UNILAB is a South-South cooperation experience, following the UNESCO global recommendation of increasing the offer of higher education courses to African countries (UNILAB, 2013). The difference between these two initiatives is that the latter is based on the principle of a strong commitment to receiving students from the Portuguese speaking, or PALOP, countries, while the former is a programme attracting students from the Global South in universities across Brazil. UNILAB's mission is to generate human resources that promote the integration of Brazil and the other CPLP member states, especially

those in Africa, by promoting regional development and cultural, scientific and educational exchange (UNILAB, 2017). As UNILAB is committed to support development through South-South cooperation, undergraduate and graduate courses are developed taking into account common interests between Brazil and the other partner countries. Thus, social and economic development were privileged: for example, agriculture, community health, education, public management and sustainable development and technology (UNILAB, 2013).

The admission process for CPLP's students is entirely managed by the Brazilian government through selective exams. In accomplishing this mission, UNILAB reserves 50 per cent of its vacancies for Brazilian students and 50 per cent for students from PALOP countries and East-Timor (UNILAB, 2013), although this target has never actually been met. From its inception until 2017, Brazilians have comprised the majority of enrolled students (77%). The other 23 per cent are distributed unevenly, with students from Guinea-Bissau comprising the second largest group with 14 per cent. After students are selected, and after their arrival in Brazil, UNILAB provides free accommodation while the legal procedures are sorted and a three month welcoming and integration programme to guide and support students in academic life, accommodation, legal procedures and academic registrations (UNILAB, 2013). The welcoming programme starts right after registration is confirmed, when students are still in their home countries, using virtual tools (UNILAB, 2013). In addition, the university offers financial aid programmes to CPLP students to pay for housing, food and maintenance.

Methodology

Fieldwork was conducted exclusively in the two campuses of UNILAB-Redenção, over the period of April-May 2018. After initial contact, formal authorizations were requested and granted, to conduct fieldwork on the premises. The qualitative methodology adopted involved two different techniques carried out simultaneously: participant observation and in-depth

interviews with 35 undergraduate international students (12 women, 23 men); 28 Brazilian students (16 women, 12 men) and 10 UNILAB staff, including professors, psychologists and a former vice-rector. The students' interview questions focused on their motivation to join UNILAB, the perceived advantages/disadvantages of studying at UNILAB and return plans. This was an opportunity for students to tell their own stories, highlighting what is important for them at UNILAB, and express their own perceptions about their experiences. Recruitment was carried out using a variety of ways: suggestions by colleagues or staff in UNILAB, snowballing and open invitations during participant observation activities.

Participant observation took place during classes, in discussion groups, cultural events and at social activities; for example, lunch at the university refectory, bus rides between campuses and class breaks, allowing the researchers to grasp how social relations take place in a specific context (de Pina Cabral, 1983; Padilla, 2017). Informed verbal consent about the interview procedure – recording and transcription – was requested and identity confidentially was explained before the interview took place, with pseudonyms used in this discussion. For the purpose of this chapter, only the interviews with international students are analysed.

Since gender balance among UNILAB's international students is unequal, males representing 59 per cent (UNILAB, 2017), the gender imbalance of the sample (23 males and 12 females) was also uneven. Nationality representation was also sought; however it was not possible to interview students from East Timor. Since 2013, the Brazilian and East Timorese Ministries of Education have had disagreements on how the exchange programme was being developed, leading to retaliations from both sides that resulted in limitations on the number of East Timorese students. And as Equatorial Guinea only officially joined the CPLP in 2014, UNILAB is still concluding its cooperation and diplomatic agreements, meaning no student from this country has as yet enrolled at the university.

Motivations

The question that opened the interview focused on the reasons to choose to study at UNILAB. Although, some variations on the students' responses were found, motivations were very similar: the opportunity to access better education and the chance to contribute to their home countries development upon return and personal growth. For example, in 2015, Vieira arrived at UNILAB to study sociology:

> The decision to come had to do with my desire to attend the university, getting a degree that would help me to find a good job in the future, in my country. I saw in UNILAB a good opportunity, because I would learn about a different country, I could get to know more about the world. And UNILAB is a Brazilian federal university, which has some prestige in Guinea. I thought it would give me a better qualification than if I stayed in Guinea, for example. Vieira, male, 24 years old, Guinea-Bissau.

Agualusa's decision to move to Brazil to study nursing in 2014 was driven by similar reasons:

> There were many reasons that brought me to UNILAB, if I have to answer very straight forward. I would say it was the desire to leave the country, the possibility of the scholarship and the common language. I always thought that having a diploma from another country, especially a country like Brazil, would help me to find a job when I return to Angola; with the scholarship I wouldn't have to worry about working to have money to pay for my education and studying in Portuguese would be much easier than if I had to learn English, German or French and in addition still study the subjects for my nurse classes. Agualusa, male, 26 years old, Angola.

Vieira and Agualusa's main motivations to join UNILAB are similar: the opportunity to study at a Brazilian public university and stand out from stay-at-home co-nationals through having a diploma from a well renowned country. In both cases, as identified in prior literature (Cairns & Smyth, 2011; Findlay et al., 2012; Waters & Brooks, 2010), pursuing an overseas degree is identified as an opportunity to gain academic and social capital to boost career opportunities.

Speaking a common language is another consideration that influences students' motivations to choose UNILAB. Language can be a driver of student mobility in two different ways: the possibility to learn or improve a different language from their own, especially English (Waters & Leung, 2013), and the convenience of sharing the same language, usually due to a colonial past, helping the adaptation and learning processes (Boerjesson, 2017; França et al., 2018; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014; Waters et al., 2011). Although, there are differences between spoken and written Portuguese in Brazil and the PALOP countries, communication can normally be accomplished (Fonseca, 2013). However, some of the hierarchies between variations of the Portuguese language support discriminatory and racist practices towards students from African countries at UNILAB (Souza & Muniz, 2017; França & Padilla, forthcoming).

Existing Networks

Other students explained that their decision to join UNILAB was strongly influenced by the fact that they already had friends and/or family at the university.

> I heard about UNILAB through a friend who was already here; he always said it was a great experience. He was part of one of the first groups who came in 2012 and now he

is doing his masters in Recife. He helped me through the whole process by sending me the links that I needed to find all the information about the dates, exams and the courses I to choose. By the time I arrived here, I felt I already knew how things were, because we talked a lot about it (...) when I got here, he also helped me to find a house and solve all the visa issues with the federal police [Brazilian authority responsible for the visa process]. Lito, male, 21 years old, Mozambique

My brother was already here, he came two years ago. Then, my father thought it would be a good idea that I join him in Brazil. And I also wanted to be with him, it is also important having family around. (…) He helped me with everything I needed to know, we talked about the entrance exams, the documents I would need to present, which courses I could take. He even spoke to a Professor to gather more information about the course I was interested in… how it would be when I arrived. If it was not for him, I would have left, my first months were awful! Pauline, female, 20 years old, St. Tome & Prince.

The two cases above illustrate how social networks and kinship play a major role in the decision to study in Brazil, in providing crucial information and/or assisting people upon arrival and during the integration process (see also Beech, 2015). The presence of social ties encourages other members to move, with the promise of support upon arrival, lower the risk of migration failure. This helps explain why theories on network and cumulative causes of migrations have argued, the growth of migrant communities in a given destination increases the likelihood that other community members will move to that country (Fussel, 2010: 162). Hence, the presence of students from the same country of origin contributes to attracting more co-nationals, as the latter can rely on the former for information about the selection process,

the quality of the university, housing, visa requirements and familiarization with student life in the new country. This information gives them confidence to go abroad, minimizing fears of the unknown.

A 'second best' choice?

Another relevant aspect identified in the interviews was that in many cases, an institution of choice was not attainable, with UNILAB seen an alternative.

> I always dreamt of going to the University of Coimbra in Portugal to study law, but it was not possible for me to go as my parents could not afford it. I was accepted at the university, but it was way too expensive. Because of that, I missed a full year. So, a friend of mine who was here told me that UNILAB's selection process was open and explained me that it was a public university and that I could even get some subventions. So, I changed my mind and I decided to come here to study public administration. And now I don't think about going there (Portugal) anymore. Adelino, male 27 years old, Mozambique.

> I was ready to go to Portugal, but I had a problem with my visa, that was not ready when it was supposed to be. I was going to a university in Lisbon, but I can't remember the name. Because of that (the problem with the visa), I would have to miss a whole year at the university and then I thought it was not worth it. This was when I heard that UNILAB was opening its selection process, as my sister told me. And the bureaucracy was much simpler and I could start my classes very soon, so I decided to come here. Maybe I can go to Portugal for a masters. But now, I am here. Djanina, female 23 years old, Angola.

These narratives bring to the forefront the influence and prestige that Portuguese universities have before the eyes of students from the former colonies. Different authors have discussed how colonial ties continue to impact on the directions of international students (Boerjesson, 2017; França et al., 2018; Madge et al., 2009; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). In some countries, obtaining a degree from a higher education institution from the former metropole is seen as highly prestigious and an advantage in achieving a better position in the labour market. Furthermore, the ex-metropoles tend to have special entry conditions for students from the former colonies, which together with the influence of existing social and kinship migration network, reinforces postcolonial flows (França et al., 2018; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). Therefore, attending a Brazilian university was not always the first choice, but UNILAB became an alternative when financial or academic constraints surfaced.

Future

When asked about their plans for the future, PALOP students declared their intention to return to their home countries.

I want to go back to St. Tomé and work as an agronomist. St. Tome has the world's most diverse biosphere. We are very rich in natural resources. So, I want to go back there and help to develop my country. There is so much that can be done and we don't do it because we don't know how. And now that I have contacts here in Brazil, it is easier to do things there. Semedo, male 22 years old, St. Tome

I still want to take a masters course so I can learn more about public administration and then go back to my country. My idea is that with all I have learnt here already, and I

can still learn, I will be able to do many things for my country. With my qualifications, it will be easier for me to get a job in the public sector. I believe if we have better public administration procedures, things in Mozambique could change. Santiago, male, 24 years old, Mozambique.

Returning to the home country is a fairly common intention among the students from Africa at UNILAB. In general, the interviewees stated their intention to go back to their home countries, however some mentioned uncertainty about their plans. The students who were willing to postpone their return justified this by stating their interest in pursuing a masters level course, with the purpose of acquiring extra qualifications before their return.

Several studies have pointed that students' desire to go back to their home country have different aspects: personal relationships, especially aging parents or partners who were not able to move; cultural values; better working opportunities at home; unemployment in the host country; and low levels of cultural integration (Alberts & Hazen, 2005; Bijwaard & Wang, 2016; Geddie, 2013). Additionally, Waters (2006) and Holloway et al. (2012) discuss how a return plan is driven by the awareness of the difficulty of finding a job in the host country because of the language barrier, bureaucratic issues or a high level of labour market competition. However, in the cases presented here, return intentions seem unrelated to such reasons, which may be more applicable to Anglophone and European contexts. Of greater significance is the chance to use skills to contribute to the development of the home country.

Conclusion

Theorization on international student mobility has grown immensely in sclale during the last two decades, covering many different features of the phenomenon both macro, meso and micro perspectives: institutions' and states' interests, attraction and retention policies, transition to

labour market dynamics, city studentification, students' motivations, aspirations and obstacles, and the role of gender, race/ethnicity and social class in shaping students' experiences. Complementary empirical research on the topic also made important advances, supported by innovative methodologies, namely biographic narratives, longitudinal approaches, ethnographies and comparative studies. Altogether, this work has contributed to legitimize the importance of student mobility and the internationalization of higher education, and create a better understanding of the diversity of experiences among international students.

The majority of studies, however, have focused primarily on mobility dynamics into and within the Global North, especially the Anglophone countries. Hence, there is still an enormous gap relating to the Global South that needs to be urgently addressed. This chapter has attempted to do so through contributing knowledge on this topic, focusing on the experience of PALOP students at UNILAB in Brazil, an example of student mobility within the Global South, following a South-South dynamic. Its significance is multi-facted. From a macro perspective, UNILAB can be seen as an attempt by the Brazilian state, at the time, to expand its influence over the African continent, especially in Lusophone contexts, competing with the established 'power,' Portugal. At the same time, through analysing the UNILAB experience from students' point of view, our findings are in accordance with mainstream trends emphasising employability motivations and the value of international experience. Moreover, and also in line with the discussion in prior literature, peers network also have an important influence in shaping this flow, by encouraging and supporting the decision to move to Brazil.

Despite these similarities, some different features were found, for instance, expectations regarding student mobility as a strategy to foster upward social mobility. In our study, contrary to what the majority of the investigations have argued, the majority of the students were from less privileged backgrounds, in many cases the first in their families to attend university. Moving to Brazil is usually the only or the most suitable option for them to

earn a tertiary degree. Students that are well-off tend go to Portugal as they have the means to pay for education in institutions that enjoy higher prestige. Our findings also suggest a different approach regarding return plans. Most PALOP students declared their intention to return to their home countries in order to contribute to the local and regional development. For this reason, we can argue that South-South mobility experiences might be helping to foster a sense of responsibility towards their home countries.

Notes

1. Venezuela is also a member of MERCUSUR; however, its membership has been suspended since 2017 because of its political situation. Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Suriname are associated members.

2. The creation of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) - a multilateral cooperation forum formed by Portugal, Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, East Timor, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique and S. Tome and Principe - in 1996, created a new international space for further exchange, enriching the possibilities for student mobility between Lusophone countries (França & Padilla, 2019).

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