

An Investigation of Post-Secondary Education and Unemployment in Bluefields, Nicaragua

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In the United States, many people take for granted the notion that a higher education degree is invaluable to securing desirable employment, but what is the value of such a degree in a society like Bluefields, Nicaragua, which has an 85% unemployment rate (Franklin, 2008; Siu, 2010)? Despite the lack of local job options, many students at BICU and URACCAN, the two universities of Bluefields, continue their studies. Through a series of 30- to 60-minute interviews in Spanish, Creole, and English with former and current university students and professors, this study investigates students' reasons for staying in school, their school experiences, their desired career paths, and their alternatives to unemployment. Many students pursue their degrees to educate and better themselves, and many of those who can't find work after graduating emigrate or work on cruise ships, wiring money back to their families from abroad. The findings of this investigation could provide insight into a different set of criteria for valuing a higher education degree, illustrate the perspectives of those without many employment opportunities, explain how those who found work did so, and further the understanding of the personal and familial repercussions faced by those who send remittances from abroad.