

Iman Lalani Laidlaw Summer 1 Reflection

My experience as a Laidlaw Scholar has been far from what I had expected. I presumed that the process would be seamless and well-structured, however, after conducting my own research on how the post-colonial context of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has impacted the region's ability to tackle climate change, I now appreciate the effort, consistency, planning and resilience that the research process entails.

In my first two weeks, I struggled to create an effective work-life balance. I felt overwhelmed by the possibilities that my research question presented and found my 'To-do' list growing by the day. It was not until I met with my research advisor Professor Vincent Kuuire that I felt like I had a clearer sense of direction. My advisor and I narrowed down the scope of my research to focus on analyzing the existing legislation related to climate change that Kenya, Ghana and South Africa have implemented and use that to draw conclusions about the rest of SSA.

I then made the decision to approach my research one country at a time. After reading through hundreds of Ghana's parliamentary Hansards and accumulating a significant amount of evidence I became acutely aware of how little time I had to complete my research paper considering the amount of information that existed. It was then that I re-evaluated how much time I had left and decided to refine my research process even more by choosing two laws from each of the three countries to analyze how they are indicative of the region's post-colonial legacy. Although I was originally disheartened by how much time I had spent in the depths of Ghana's Hansards, I soon learned that such obstacles are part and parcel of the research process.

Over the next few weeks, I felt much more confident and excited by my research, however, I found it hard to be disciplined and manage my time appropriately. After returning to

Toronto from being home in London I eventually found a schedule that allowed me to split up my work throughout the day. This made me realize the importance of not being so hard on myself but also setting achievable goals, holding myself accountable and ensuring I set aside time to exercise and be social along with completing my research.

Throughout this summer I was able to employ my leadership skills of time management, adaptability and perseverance which were key, as there were times when the process felt both quite isolating and demanding. After taking Gallup's Strengthquest I tried to harness my signature themes of achiever, communication, connectedness and belief and use them to motivate me to work hard and produce work that I feel will be both meaningful and impactful to society. I also ensured that I made time to regularly reflect on my performance and writing skills throughout my research journey. This helped me ameliorate my productivity and the quality of the work I was creating. Moreover, from the start of my research, I coordinated to meet bi-weekly with my professor so that I could update him on my progress, remain well-focused as well as ask him any outstanding questions. I now acknowledge that asking for help and appreciating the bounds of your knowledge is not a weakness but an important leadership quality that enables learning and growth.

I am very grateful for this opportunity as it has made me aware of my own strengths but also areas where I would like to improve. This experience has also allowed me to think about the kinds of research I would like to undertake in the future. If I were to pursue more of my own research I hope to be able to work alongside others and perhaps conduct interviews as a part of my data collection.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Vincent Kuuire for his continued guidance, patience and direction throughout this process as well as to my fellow scholars for sharing tips and lessons from their own personal learning experiences.