

LiA Report: Learning resilience through practice

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Having 6-weeks leadership in Lusaka, Zambia have taught me a lot about leadership in practice. I undertook my leadership project in a local community school which fills the educational gap of the region. Thanks to the connection that this school has with Catriona Wilson, a staff at the CEED centre at our university, I am able to join the school as an intern. My main focus is to help the school to raise funds and improve public awareness of the school. I have helped the school to create a website and one donating QR code to attach on the website. Moreover, I also implemented new teaching methods in helping the school to improve teaching qualities. In this report, I will analyse my takeaways from the LiA project in four parts. In the first part, I will summarize my achievements and reflection during the 6 weeks. In the second part of the report, I will summarize my reflection through the leadership training. In the third part of the report, I will explain the future development of the project I have throughout my Laidlaw journey. In the last part of the report, I focus on t my potential contributions as 'give back' to the program.

The main takeaway I learned from the experience is the importance of resilience in leadership. When I was invited to the application interview of Laidlaw scholar, I was being asked to answer the question: what

resilience to me is. At the time, I was unable to give a precise answer to the question. However, after my journey in Zambia, I could give a better answer. Since the first week arriving in Lusaka, I have experienced some unexpected challenges. Initially, the battery that I prepared for the power cut stop working. The shortage of electricity has cut off my connection and I am unable to imply the numerical methods in teaching. It makes me realize that how vulnerable the multimedia methods are in underdeveloped areas. Since then, I was having bad lucks throughout my project. I was bitten by a cat, due to the reason that the region I am living is rabies infected area, so I have to take anti-rabies vaccination. Then, I have hit the frame of window, I have to go to the clinic for stitching. Other than that, due to the temperature gap between day and night, I catch cold multiple times during my project. In terms of the visa issues, I have to heading to the immigration office 5 times in order to obtain a certificate from them to prove my immigration status. During this process, I have learned the term resilience in day-to-day practice. I have firstly managed to positively think about the challenges that I faced the in this process. I used to think having these issues means that I am unlucky, but this time I felt that these challenges trained me to be a better leader. Moreover, in terms of the disruptive impact these challenges have on my timetable. I have rearranged my working schedule to adapt the time that I need to go to clinics. Such challenges

teach me how to remain resilience during complicated scenarios. Although I have expected tough situations during my LiA project, when such things came, I still panic at first. Then, I used my knowledge and understanding of resilience to re-organize my project. It seems to be that resilience as a leadership context means handling things smoothly in challenging scenarios.

The leadership training is an important concept of my Laidlaw journey. My interest in applying to the program originated from the enhanced leadership training that the program has. In my case, I think the first leadership events trains my capability in knowing myself. I used to doubt to struggle to analyse how my own attributes or personalities impact on my leadership style and not able to have a clear understanding of my own strength and weaknesses in leadership practice. The test offered by the Laidlaw team makes me to realize my previous practice in leadership can be improved. During the leadership event, scholars are encouraged to share their DISC file with each other. In this process, I found that my file looks a bit different with other people's file. Such comparison makes me to reflect the uniqueness that my leadership style can be. According to the profile, I am good at inspiring people and provide emotional support to them. This advice helps me to improve my leadership approach. I have implemented this

concept into my project to make my leadership more effective. Another concept in my Laidlaw journey that I benefit a lot from is the Laidlaw conference in Dublin. Despite the travel issues made my journey to Dublin very difficult, I have enjoyed in making connections with scholars from other institutions. The process of sharing and exchanging our experiences about our research projects and prospective plan about our LiA projects. Such discussions inspired me a lot. The talks organized by the foundation helps me to connect my Laidlaw journey with future professional development. It also inspired with me by providing diverse central organized leadership projects. The presentation that scholars gave shows how they use their leadership skills in real world actions. I was being deeply impressed by the detailed presentation by scholars in introducing how their leadership skills have been improved during this process.

Bringing back to the LiA projects, I think there are several developments that can be done. Firstly, regarding on the visa issues that I have got. I suggest that for future scholars joining this collaborative project with star top community school. It is important to register first at local authorities. Local government is highly dependent on using paper files to work. Without paper registration, the extension of visa could be time consuming and difficult. Moreover, scholars should also leave enough

time to handle the visa extension. In my case, I have started the preparation 1 week before my visa actually expires and it was not enough. I advise scholars to prepare visa extension since the second week they arrive at the school and this would allow them to undergo every part of the process. When dealing with the bureaucratic system of the country, it is important to request paper documents for every part of the application. Sometimes, when some relevant documents are missing in paper formats, even if you hold the electronic version, it can still be denied. My second advice is on weather, although the country is located near the equator, it is highly essential for scholars to prepare warm clothing during winter as the temperature difference could be huge during days and nights. It is also advised by the travel clinics to drink bottled waters as much as possible to prevent cholera or at least take bottled water during the first two weeks. Additionally, the country has a tradition in drinking teas throughout the day so tea should be a good gifting option. In terms of the project itself, I suggest that future scholars should be aware of the importance of preparing a physical notebook in advance. Due to the vulnerability of the power supply in the region, laptops and tablets are not the most reliable way in storing notes. Furthermore, one thing that I wish I could do better is to prepare more adaptive teaching materials for students at different levels. As in the community school, students have different socio-economic

backgrounds which means they have different level of understanding of subjects. When I use the same materials for everyone. Some students may struggle with it while others thought it is too easy for them. The class size is another issue that I had in teaching. For baby classes and year one, the class size is more than 20, however, for students in year 3 and year 4, only 2–3 students per class. This creates difficulties in organizing class activities. Future scholars need to be adaptive in organizing more teamwork activities for bigger classes while designing more individual activities for smaller classes. The final advice that I have is to get involved in the compound society. The compound is how people call their community. As the school locates in the compound, it plays an important role in connecting people who lives in different part of the compounds. I spent a lot of time of my stay to communicate with them and get to know them and exchange our ideas. This helped me to improve my cultural understanding about Zambia. As a leadership from different cultural background, I suggested future scholars in keeping communication with them which can give them a different perspective in viewing the life–world of the project.

In the last part of the report, I wish to introduce three ways that I can keep contributing to the project. Firstly, as a scholar who has international experience in both research projects and LiA projects, I

can share more experience about how to create a feasible research project including oversea elements. During this process, I have a better understanding of how to deal with the travel related issues during the project and how to effectively prepare the project. For instance, my story in Zambia could let me give more information on visa extension and travel health issues to future scholars. The network that I have in both countries could also help future scholars in approaching their own project. Secondly, I would like to contribute more on the Laidlaw network website. In my opinion, it provides a good platform for peer scholars exchanging their views or professional development. I will keep spending time in reading or even posting my own thoughts on the website and commenting on other's post. The network's website can also keep me updating with the new information about the development of the project. I can get to know more about the new projects and activities provided by the foundation. Thirdly, I am also willing to mentor prospective scholars. I think I am able to provide advice in application in general to see if the program is suitable for them. I can also provide advice for them in how to write application essays that reflect their leadership potentials. For applications about anthropology, I could be helpful in providing advice on how they can link their fieldwork with the LiA project. I wish I can share my learning progress with anyone who is interested in applying the project. I can also share with them about my

leadership growth and self-awareness.

At the end of this report, I wish to thank Lord Laidlaw in creating the Laidlaw scholarship which helps me in the past two years in implementing two projects. I also wish to thank all staffs in the Laidlaw team at the university of St Andrews such as Maddy, Cassice and Celina. Without their help, I would not able to have such a good journey. I also wish to appreciate my Zambian family member Mercy, Isaac, Charles, Chisomo and Fifi, my project coordinator Catriona. Their contribution and kindness helped me in accomplishing my LiA project in Zambia. I also wish to thank for everyone who helped me and give me advice in my journey. I am glad to improve my leadership skills throughout this process and gain more confidence in academic research. In the future, I wish I have opportunity in continuing contributing to the foundation and the program to help more scholars benefit from it.