



Scholar Report

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Title of Scholarship Project:	Globalised Workplaces: Exploring Attitudes towards Cultural Diversity in the Graduate Workplace

Abstract

This reflective report delves into the research undertaken as part of the Laidlaw Scholarship Program, its impact, dissemination efforts, and the broader personal and professional development it has facilitated. My journey so far involves the publication of research on the Laidlaw Scholars Network, participation in leadership training and workshops, future engagement in student-led conferences, volunteering, and the transformative experience of conducting a literature review. The report discusses my development of leadership skills, future career plans, and the program's larger impact.

Introduction

The Laidlaw Scholarship Program has provided me with a remarkable opportunity to engage in research that explores the intricacies of cultural diversity and its implications for organizational performance. Over the course of 6 weeks, I read research articles, journal papers, books and other important literature on this topic. This enabled me to complete a

comprehensive literature review and create a research poster to better visualise the findings. I also had the privilege of partaking in the residential gatherings and instructional seminars organised by the foundation, an experience that not only enriched my intellect but also facilitated the cultivation of new friendships and a deeper understanding of myself. My Laidlaw journey so far is signified by the deep impact it has had on my personal development and its ripple effect on my academic and professional pursuits.

The Research Project

For my research project this summer, I was responsible for completing a literature review on the topic “Globalised Workplaces: Exploring Attitudes towards Cultural Diversity in the Graduate Workplace”. The significance of my research extends beyond academic curiosity. It addresses a pertinent issue in today's globalized world: the value of cultural diversity in organizations. This is because the world continues to become more interconnected - socially, politically, economically, and environmentally. So, a better understanding of how cultural diversity aids in overcoming economic challenges and the dynamic interplay among different social groups can lead to insights on how we can leverage such a unique globalised opportunity and solve complex problems. Thus, the research offers actionable insights that can inform corporate practices and strategies, emphasizing the need for diverse workforces.

Being my first time undertaking such an assignment made the task daunting but also exciting. I was fortunate to receive guidance from Ms Maria Hussain as my research supervisor, who was a constant support throughout the period. With an unparalleled depth of expertise in this field, she shared invaluable insights and expert counsel on the best approach for embarking upon the research endeavour. After our initial discussions, I

gained clarity on what my next steps should be and how I should go about selecting sources for my research. The following few weeks simply involved reading, a lot of reading. Initially, I tried to run through complete journal articles and sometimes chapters of books, taking snippets of relevant information and storing them in a separate Google document. I soon realised this process to be extremely time-consuming and inefficient, as learning in depth about a specific topic did not necessarily translate into useful information for my writing. I switched strategies and then began glossing through the introduction and conclusions first, only diving deep into the body once I was assured about the article's relevance. In due course of time, I slowly built up my draft document to a strength of 10,000 words. The next step was to boil down this information to a couple of thousand words and present a logical flow of statements. During my preliminary reading phase, I had familiarised myself with the nuances of this topic and identified its discussion into 4 main subcategories - Social Impact, Economic Value, Organisational Value and Diversity Management; which became the pillars of my literature review. Although a slightly different approach, such a stylised presentation based on dominant themes allowed me to provide important context and brief background information to the reader before going deeper into the crux of the research - the perceived value of cultural diversity in our modern workplace environment and its role in enhancing performance. It was important for me to keep in mind that the main role of a literature review is to synthesise existing literature and provide a digestible account of the current views on this topic. Hence, it was important to maintain objectivity and provide proportionate evidence to both sides of an argument. Rather than painting a biased picture and sharing personal opinions, I gave the theoretical merits and demerits backed by statistical evidence and case studies. One of the main conclusions that can be drawn from this review is that there seems to be a

net positive effect of cultural diversity's role in organisational performance which is why we can see its increasing presence in graduate workplaces. However, equally important is the role of diversity management in realising the benefits of diversity while simultaneously mitigating the drawbacks. Innovative pedagogy, informed education, appropriate diversity training, HR policies, and inclusive leadership can collectively foster a culture of growth and inclusion in both educational and workplace environments.

During the summer, I was informed that a fellow student was also working on understanding cultural diversity; focused more on the education and student perspective. As a senior with experience in writing literature reviews, she was another source of valuable advice on conducting a successful review. The final week involved making the final touches (proofreading, referencing, and formatting) in the review and creating a research poster that best represented my work. While seeking inspiration for my poster, I examined various examples from previous presentations. Interestingly, I observed that a significant portion of these posters predominantly relied on dense text to elucidate their research processes. However, encouraged by my supervisor, I embarked on a distinctive approach. My emphasis shifted towards the creation of a visually engaging representation, wherein I employed a diamond as a powerful symbol to convey the rich tapestry of cultural diversity.

My research endeavours have led to the publication of my work on the Laidlaw Scholars Network. The open-access nature of this platform allows anyone interested to gain comprehensive insights into my research findings. It also provides a valuable resource for academics and practitioners seeking to deepen their understanding of this critical topic. Completion of this project has led to an immense sense of gratification, leaving me proud of the results.

Personal Impact

Studying about diversity and its role in workplaces helped me understand the importance of inclusive leadership, and how leaders accommodate and manage multicultural teams to make the most of their unique contributions. The key is to find a balance where minority stakeholders are included without leaving the existing majority groups feeling threatened. This requires sound technical skills on the management's front so that workers are judged based on their productivity and contributions but also social skills that never allow conflicts to escalate. So studying such leadership styles also informed my views on what a successful leader looks like and the kind of person I aim to be.

Reading so many articles led to the development of a special appreciation for the art of academic writing, presenting useful information in intellectually ripe sentences and supplementing statements with appropriate evidence. Beyond academic proficiency, my research experience enhanced my project management and time allocation skills, valuable traits in almost any professional setting.

The Residential events and training workshops have greatly enhanced my interpersonal skills and engagement in social situations. Active listening, understanding different opinions and learning about other people on this programme have led to the development of strong bonds of friendship. We recently completed an education outreach day that involved mentoring 6th-form students and leading numerous fun and engaging activities. It was such an interesting day talking to these kids while guiding them through the tasks. Their unpredictable chain of thoughts surely led to a lot of laughs and all the scholars left the school with a smile on their faces. With the start of a new academic year, our cohort is now also responsible for gathering

the interest of freshers towards this truly incredible opportunity. Some of us volunteered at the fresher's fair stand spreading awareness about this scholarship and addressing student queries. Here I was able to meet Molly, a 2021 Laidlaw scholar on the first day of the fair and we shared our experiences on the programme so far. Listening to her talk about her LiA period and its impact has motivated me to pursue a project in a similar direction that leads to positive and meaningful work. It has only been a few months and I have already started thinking like a leader, looking at how to make the most of each opportunity and giving back to the local communities wherever possible. This speaks to the success of this programme and its ability to fundamentally change students, shaping them into future leaders.

Future Ahead

Currently pursuing my undergraduate degree in Economics and Finance, my future career aspirations lie in the financial services and consulting industry. Here, research and analytical skills are integral components of virtually every job and are highly valuable. The research project thus has sharpened my analytical abilities, making me better prepared for roles that require a deep understanding of data and its implications. Moreover, the research process encouraged creative thinking and multi-faceted perspectives, qualities essential in the dynamic world of financial services and consulting.

I am also thinking of completing a Master's degree in the future. Once again, the experience accumulated through my research project is beneficial in demonstrating my competency and ability to complete analysis-oriented tasks. By networking with scholars of different cohorts and learning about their experiences such as placement years, working in industry or pursuing their higher education goals, I have inherently gained

insightful information on the mindset and beliefs that guide these decisions. This will hopefully inform my own future decisions where I objectively think which route is best suited to my interests.

I am excited and grateful to attend the Annual Laidlaw Conference being hosted in Dublin this year, another fantastic event organised and sponsored by the Laidlaw Foundation. This will be a great opportunity to meet fellow undergraduate scholars across the UK and learn about their research projects. I will be looking out for research from all sorts of different fields and not just those specialising in business. As shared before, I have gained a special appreciation for the research process itself so will be curious to see how other scholars felt about their first summer on the programme. Building connections with scholars in person and engaging with them on social media platforms can facilitate the development of robust professional relationships. These connections could potentially evolve into research collaborations in the future or even lead to professional acquaintanceships should our career paths align. So I am really excited to be present at the conference and make the most of this event.

Conclusion

The Laidlaw Leadership and Research Program has been a transformative experience for me so far. It has provided me with exposure to the world of research, leadership, and impactful engagement. The last few months have led to an internal shift and a more positive outlook towards the future ahead of me. To summarise, I have joined a community full of genuine, kind and caring people. Bringing together their diverse backgrounds, everyone has an interesting story to share. The research project and poster, leadership training and volunteering have enriched my academic and personal growth. Cultivating a diverse set of transferable skills, including but not limited to teamwork, problem-solving, and effective communication, not only

enhances my professional prowess but also paints a vivid portrait of who I am as a candidate when seeking work experience opportunities within esteemed firms. As I step into the future, I carry with me not only the knowledge gained from my research but also a passion for inclusive leadership and a commitment to making a meaningful impact on the world.

I would like to close by thanking the Laidlaw Foundation and the team here at the University of Leeds. Everyone from Rebecca, Matthew, my supervisor Maria to all the people behind the screens contributing to the amazing work the foundation undertakes and of course, my wonderful fellow Laidlaw scholars. I am immensely grateful to you all who have helped make my first year at university an extraordinary success. Your unwavering support and dedication have been pivotal in helping me achieve my goals, and I am determined to harness this momentum as I move forward into the future. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who played a part in bringing this remarkable program to life, and I am eager to continue this journey with the same enthusiasm and commitment that has defined my initial year.