



## A review of the programme from Birke Lema, Dental Public Health MSc (2018-19)

*The Future Global Leadership Fellowship (FGLF) at King's is a postgraduate co-curricular programme running for one year with distinctive tasks each term. It is a newly introduced innovative learning opportunity with a potential of posing big impact in the future.*

As one of the first cohort, I found the fellowship very interesting and it gave an additional flavour to my student life at King's. For me, this programme was more of a reflective learning experience highlighting challenges as a leader in the past. It has helped me realise the more successful leadership attributes I didn't know I had. Overall, it is **three terms of self-examination and learning, facilitated by leadership experts including business and political leaders, alongside the self-education from assigned activities such as reading, writing, discussing and reflecting.**

The programme is not just aimed to create leaders, rather to identify the qualities needed for leadership and self-examine. I would say one's leadership experience of any kind would be an asset in this program. Thus, success of the fellowship is not measured by making all participants leaders, but it is in individuals, recognising if they want to be a leader or prefer not to identify themselves as one. Both leadership and followership need certain qualities of their own. Although both are pillars of change when interwoven properly, their position can switch in certain circumstances such as in a crisis. Therefore, those who decide not to pursue a leadership practice didn't fail, rather chose to accept leadership of others for the right reason.

### What I learned and what to expect from this programme?

As a hospital dentist and an academic staff member who delved into a leadership practice without having either a knowledge of the subject or a mentor, **this programme for me was full of 'ohos and ahas'**. As well as familiarising myself with the theory of leadership, listening to experiences of the great leaders I encountered in the programme, and some of the brainstorming exercises, taught me different **practical problem-solving skills** and how to face an unexpected encounter. In addition, it gave me **a taste of social sciences**, and I think participating in this programme, which approaches leadership as a collaborative social practice, is an interesting experience for a person with strictly natural sciences background.

The course had some challenges including understanding the significant proportion of the matters presented. If you are an international student, on top of being from a dental or a related background participating in this programme like me, you will have pleasure of getting lost in the middle. Sometimes, frequent presentation of some concepts and words might give you a headache. Be it about the NHS or how other systems work in the UK, there might be some you won't fully get when they appear as an example or explanation of a concept.

Nevertheless, you won't be lost forever, you will probably return from the course with **new information in your locker**. In the meantime, you might end up thinking how difficult a career in political leadership is, or become more interested in it, unlike me. For me, it appeared to be much harder than I thought; and some of the sessions I attended also showed me other aspects of democracy which I never have thought about. For instance, as a quote from the former president of Nigeria, H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, from his speech at the inauguration of the African Leaders Global Engagement Series, hosted by the King's African Leadership Centre (ALC); **'Democracy doesn't give a power to the best man, but to the chosen'**.

I had the honour of attending speeches delivered by global leaders such as the Hon Julia Gillard, the first Australian female Prime-Minister, and to pose questions. Being taught and inspired by our Principal Prof Ed Byrne and Vice-Principal International Prof Funmi Olonisakin was a privilege of being an FGL fellow. I have also met a **dynamic group of people who I wouldn't have the chance to meet.**

In general, this fellowship gave me a **better self-understanding and helped me find a way forward**, not only as a leader or professional but as a person. And I received a better understanding of leadership. I also learned additional life skills and improved some I had before, like planning and time management while I was trying to balance between my regular academic programme, FGLF duties and my off-campus life.

Additionally, I now know that one can't necessarily be classified neither as a good or bad leader in general; and situations can determine one's success in leadership. **If we open our eyes, leaders are everywhere**, and they can evolve in different situations. Different people might also have different qualities for certain tasks and in this globalised world, we need lots of global leaders. Therefore, you never know what you are capable of or what you can contribute. So, if you are already a fellow this year, get yourself organised, be ahead of yourself for the given tasks and enjoy the programme. If you are not, you better start thinking about taking part in this programme next year and **find out if you are the future global leader**.

***Birke Lema, Dental Public Health MSc (2018-19)***