

DEVELOPING LEADERS FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS THROUGH EDUCATION



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PERSONAL NOTE

Why did I start this?

I had known about the Churchill Fellowship for a while and always aspired to be a Fellow but I knew this was not something to rush. Sitting in a classroom, invigilating for a multiple-choice exam at a school I was teaching at in Ogun State Nigeria, the Fellowship dropped in my mind. I quickly looked it up on my phone to see if it was still operating and found that applications had already closed. That was fine because it meant I was ahead and had plenty of time to prepare for the next round. Walking into the room on the day of our induction for the Fellowship I felt an overwhelming sense that this Fellowship was much bigger than me. The ideas and passion I have are far beyond me alone.

Reflecting on my trajectory through education, I realise how my education has been the conduit through which I have been exposed to life enhancing opportunities. Though I attended a failing state school growing up, the extra curricular activities I was involved with filled in gaps and helped me develop leadership skills that supplemented academic studies and aided me into higher education. The opportunities presented to me in addition to my academic education have been transformative. From being a Girl Guide and consistently attending meetings every Friday for years; to being a delegate on the first ever Aleto Leadership programme where I was mentored by business leaders and introduced to a cohort of driven and like-minded students; to having the opportunity to study abroad is part of my undergraduate degree. These opportunities have shaped my experience of the world.

Yes, I may have come from what many would consider a disadvantaged background but I have been given ample opportunities to develop, explore and been presented with tangible opportunities that have enabled me to thrive. I believe in a world where your social background doesn't affect your chances of living a fulfilling life and having the opportunity to thrive.

In light of the advantageous and well-supported background I came from, no sooner was I hit by the reality of my social background than when I was offered a place to study my master's at the University of Oxford. This was a dream come true for me. I always strove to be the best, at the top, and push limits. I applied and got into one of the best universities in the world. Rachael from Sion Manning was going to Oxford. Or was she? The gravity of the £18,110 tuition and college fees hit me hard and fast. I thought the 'social mobility scholarship' that was directly sent to me was pretty much guaranteed but little did I know what I was ahead of me. Being faced with a dream offer from the University of Oxford but also the reality of not having the funds to go made me realise how many institutions of quality education and opportunity are systematically closed to people from certain social backgrounds.

My master's was crowdfunded by my community. What got me to Oxford was the collective support of the phenomenal people I had met through the invaluable experiences afforded to me over the years. I was blessed to have this community behind me. Many people from disadvantaged backgrounds do not.

I have been involved with the Aleto Foundation since 2011 when I was a delegate of their first ever leadership development programme for young people. This experience enhanced my life in so many ways: from learning about myself and how I work best, to developing a network of leaders in various fields and a network of peers that would encourage and inspire me, even to the present day. I thought to myself, wow, this was just a four-day programme but had such a lasting impact on me, how can this be brought to other young people. Better yet, how can this leadership development be brought to

students through their schools? How can leadership development become part of the curriculum at schools?

This Fellowship caused me to interrogate my definition of leadership. Is leadership about being in business? Is it about service? Is it about influence? Is it about all of these things or none of these things? I visited schools that were creating leaders from so many different backgrounds but the qualities they were honing in the students looked similar. Young people who are self-aware, compassionate, and confident in who they are and where they have come from.

Through this Fellowship, I wanted to find out how schools and organisations around the world are developing leaders, and as a result changing the trajectory of disadvantaged young people, through education.

At the time of the Fellowship, I worked as Head of Programmes for the Aleto Foundation – a social mobility charity focused on identifying and developing the next generation of leaders from communities who have historically found it challenging to access jobs due to their backgrounds. I have since worked as a Diversity and Inclusion Consultant, advising businesses on how to create more race and gender equality in UK workplaces. I am currently working with the University of Oxford to create postgraduate scholarships for Black British students.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Unfortunately, in the UK, we still live in a society where how much you achieve in life is essentially determined by how much your parents earn.¹ There are students across the UK who can achieve more with the right support and access to opportunities while they are at school. This Fellowship aims to understand how schools and organisations develop leaders from disadvantaged backgrounds, through education. I sought to understand how leadership skills were taught in school and how curriculums were adapted to ensure students from disadvantaged backgrounds thrive in their lives beyond grades and examinations.

Major findings

This fellowship found that in order to develop leaders from disadvantaged backgrounds, through education, special attention needs to be focused on the following areas:

- 1. Razor-sharp vision**
 - A very clear vision that transcends academic attainment is established.
- 2. Role model faculty and staff**
 - Staff are not only experts in their field but also role models to the students.
- 3. Focus on wellbeing**
 - The mental wellbeing of students is taken as seriously as their physical wellbeing.
- 4. Adapt curriculum to demographic**
 - Curriculums are adapted and relevant to the demographic of students.
- 5. Connected to business**
 - Partnerships with local and global businesses are developed to connect students to opportunities.
- 6. Space for parents**
 - Parents are an integral part of school life – space is made for them and they also contribute.
- 7. Encourage innovation**
 - Innovation and entrepreneurship are the norm and not separated from studies.
- 8. Culturally aware teachers**
 - Staff and teachers are culturally diverse and understand the backgrounds of the students.
- 9. Funding**
 - Ensure money is not a barrier to accessing quality educational opportunities.

Recommendations

1. Schools should create ambitious visions beyond academic attainment and envision the impact they want their young people to have, beyond grades.
2. Access to role models from the community.
3. Curriculums should be tailored to incorporate elements of the students' culture.
4. Have a focus on wellbeing at schools and teach students to build healthy wellbeing habits.
5. Equip young people with soft skills that are needed to thrive once they leave school.
6. Embed parents into the school community by creating physical space for them and creating roles for them to be involved in the life of the school.

¹ https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-10/University_Recruitment_Manager.pdf

7. Provide more funding for existing programmes such as the Aleto Foundation that develop the leadership skills of disadvantaged young people and enable them to build a network.
8. Work with organisations to enable students to develop their leadership skills and broaden their horizons through creating a business.
9. Create scholarships for students to access quality educational opportunities by creating endowment funds for disadvantaged groups.
10. Cultural awareness and anti-racism training for staff and teachers in schools.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

Background

There is a serious social mobility issue in the UK. Though educational attainment and profession are not the only indicators of success and leadership, the following statistics paint a picture of the social mobility crisis in the UK. Statistics from the State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility Report show that only 6% of doctors, 12% of chief executives and 12% of journalists today are from working-class origins.² The same report found that 'in youth social mobility cold spots, disadvantaged young people are almost twice as likely to be NEET (not in education, employment or training) after GCSEs, half as likely to gain two or more A-levels (or equivalents), and half as likely to enter higher education, compared with those living in hotspots.'³ This shows the gravity of the issues across the UK, from GCSEs to A-Level and into University. The Sutton Trust Leading People 2016 report further explains that 'in England, students from the highest social class groups are three times more likely to enter university as those from the lowest social groups.' These statistics show that for the most disadvantaged students in the UK, university is not a real prospect. These are the young people I am seeking solutions for through my Fellowship.

Looking at careers and the world of work, research by the Sutton Trust reveals that even though only 7% of the UK population attended independent schools, 74% of UK barristers, 51% of journalists and 48% of the civil service attended independent schools (Appendix 1). The social backgrounds of people in leading UK professions do not reflect the reality of the nation. I specifically highlighted the civil service statistic, as the civil service exists to represent the needs of the nation as a whole, so it is particularly worrying that the workforce doesn't represent the social background of the people it is working on behalf of.

Is the question: What skills are being taught at independent schools that can be embedded into state schools or programmes for disadvantaged young people in the UK? Or, how do we get more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds into elite educational institutions? At this stage, I think it is a mixture of the two.

In answer to these questions, I found that leadership skills are at the core of what can transform the lives of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. I sought to learn how a focus on leadership can be embedded in school curriculums in the UK and how a leadership school for disadvantaged young people can be realised in the UK.

Africa focus

I had a few ideas of schools and organisations I wanted to visit – some I had been admiring from afar for years and others that I'd recently learnt of. Visiting organisations in African countries was very intentional. Africa is not often thought of as a place to gain best practice on education but I knew programmes and organisation were doing exemplary work that the UK could learn from. Institutes of

² State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility Report, page 3
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf

³ State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility Report, page 55

education like Ashesi University and African Science Academy in Ghana and the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy in South Africa are just an example of some of these outstanding institutions.

Though school curriculums in the US, South Africa and Kenya differ to those of the UK, the values, curriculum design, and school and programme structure can be translated to a UK context.

Aims and objectives

The aim of my project was to understand best practice in schools where the majority of students are from disadvantaged backgrounds and how a focus on leadership transforms the lives of students and allows them to thrive.

I sought to gain an understanding of how a leadership curriculum is administered alongside the academic curriculum and how this is done without hindering, but rather enhancing students' academic success.

In the UK, there are extra curricular leadership programmes e.g. The Challenge and boarding school scholarships for disadvantaged young people, but I have not seen many schools with the specific aim of developing students from disadvantaged backgrounds into leaders. I visited schools where the benefits of such programmes were an everyday experience for students.

Purpose of the report

This report aims to share the best practice learnt from the various schools and programmes I visited and outline key components required to create a school or programme designed to develop leaders from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Approach/methods

To capture data, I observed classes, events and programmes in schools and interviewed teachers and staff. I visited six schools and two educational programmes. Four of these were in the USA; two were in Johannesburg, and two in Kenya. I specifically chose these schools and organisations because they stand out for impacting the lives of disadvantaged young people.

What do I mean by 'leadership'?

Definitions of leadership range from 'the person who leads or commands a group, organisation, or country'⁴ to 'a person or thing that holds a dominant or superior position within its field, and is able to exercise a high degree of control or influence over others.'⁵ These are fair definitions but it is important for me to define what I mean by a leader. Good leadership isn't only about businesses or organisations, it is about character traits that enable a person to influence others and create positive change. In different settings, leadership may mean many things but I believe the following characteristics really define what being a good leader is and these characteristics transcend the workplace.

Bold and confident

This alludes to young people being empowered by owning their story. Many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds may feel ashamed of their background and where they have come from. They need to know that they don't need to hide this. Michelle Obama in her memoir, *Becoming*, talks about this very topic. She has famously said 'your story is what you have, what you will always have. It

⁴ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/leader>

⁵ <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/leader.html>

is something to own'.⁶ Becoming confident in who you are, finding your voice and learning how to deal with fear is a journey and one that most leaders take. Being confident in oneself enables a person to make bold decisions. To embark on this journey, introspection and self-awareness is required.

Self-aware

As a leader, self-awareness is of key importance. To be confident in who you are and in your abilities, you need to know who you are. Becoming aware of all aspects of oneself and learning how to reflect on your character and actions is imperative for leaders. A leader is someone who has taken the time to get to know who they are and understands what they are capable of and is also clear about areas they need to improve on. They are self-aware.

Integrity

An experienced teacher in the UK who I spoke to upon returning from my Fellowship shared that she always tells her students: “*grades will open the door but integrity will keep it open.*”⁷ This resonated with me as I truly believe having integrity, at all costs, is a crucial leadership characteristic. Having integrity means you take complete responsibility for your actions and the consequences of them. My definition of a leader is someone who works ethically and chooses to do the right, even when it is hard.

Empathetic and humble

When I speak about leaders in this project, I am talking about people who are empathetic and humble. People who can empathise with others are able to influence and lead well. If you are self centred or puffed up, it will be difficult for people to work with you and ultimately hinder you from achieving shared goals. A popular proverb states that: ‘When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom.’⁸

Always willing to learn

To remain humble but also to be the best at what you set your mind to, a leader remembers that they are on a continuous journey of learning. Good leaders are always willing to learn and willing to learn from anybody and from anywhere – they are open minded. This means being open to learning from people who are very different from them or those less experienced or younger than them. Leaders thrive on any opportunity to learn, develop themselves, and gain new knowledge.

High standards of excellence

My definition of a leader includes striving for excellence. Leaders set the standards wherever they are and a good leader set a standard of excellence. This doesn't mean they are harsh or set unrealistic goals but a instils an ethos of doing things well. When the small and seemingly unimportant things are done well, it won't be so difficult to do big and significant things excellently.

⁶ Michelle Obama, Becoming – <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/michelle-obama-reveals-memoir-front-cover-your-story-is-what-you-have>

⁷ Claudenia Williams

⁸ Holy Bible, Proverbs 11:2

FINDINGS

1. RAZOR-SHARP VISION

The organisations I visited aren't just schools, they are movements. Each organisation transcended beyond just being a school due to its razor-sharp vision. These schools have large visions to transform cities, countries, continents and systems. Their vision doesn't end at giving each student a good education; it goes beyond this to the point of impacting local and global communities. The effect of this razor-sharp vision is that the schools achieve and exceed their goals and have a positive impact beyond the walls of their school.

Monarch School – 'help homeless students break the cycle of poverty through education.'⁹

Urban Prep Academies – 'to provide a comprehensive, high quality, college preparatory education that results in graduates succeeding in college.'¹⁰

Village Leadership Academy – 'We envision a society where people from all communities are equipped to address the social, political and economic issues that confront them.'¹¹

Ron Clark Academies – 'to transform classrooms around the world by demonstrating transformative methods and techniques that are embraced and replicated everywhere.'¹²

African Leadership Academy – 'to transform Africa by developing a powerful network of over 6,000 leaders who will work together to address Africa's greatest challenges, achieve extraordinary social impact, and accelerate the continent's growth trajectory.'¹³

Starehe Boy's School – 'to be a global Centre of excellence in youth development, effectively providing quality academic and leadership skills geared for the promotion of a just society founded on high moral principles.'¹⁴

Zawadi Africa – 'to empower African women to participate in the development of the continent through education and self-determination.'¹⁵

⁹ <http://monarchschoools.org/>

¹⁰ Urban Prep Academies brochure

¹¹ Village Leadership Academy Website, <https://www.vlacademy.org/about-village-leadership-academy/missionvision/>

¹² Ron Clark Academy Website, <http://www.ronclarkacademy.com/Mission-Vision-and-Values>

¹³ African Leadership Academy Website, <http://www.africanleadershipacademy.org/about/our-model/>

¹⁴ Stahere Boy's Centre and School Website, <https://www.stareheboyscentre.ac.ke/sbc/school-info/our-values/#1469459916283-31c88b16-81ca>

¹⁵ Zawadi Africa Education Fund Website, <http://www.zawadiafrica.org/about-us/>



The poster in the photo reads: 'Empowering Africa's future women leaders'

Case Study: Monarch School vision for homeless students

At Monarch School in San Diego, the vision is so clear that they are more focused on breaking the long-term cycle of homelessness than on the present reality. I found it shocking that some of the students who attend Monarch are currently homeless. I thought, surely the first thing a school for students affected by homelessness would do is provide accommodation to ensure the students weren't living on the streets? I initially thought it would be a boarding school. But no, Monarch doesn't provide accommodation for their students and this is because of their vision. I find it so striking that in response to the FAQ on their website: 'where do Monarch students live?' the answer is: 'Our students live in shelters, motels, single room occupancy housing, double- or tripled-up with other families, at camp sites, in cars, or on the streets.'

They are focused on breaking the cycle of poverty, not just getting young people off the streets. If this were the focus, Monarch would be a homeless shelter and not a school. This was so striking to me but after discussions with the principal, it made sense. Having a clear, razor-sharp vision is so important, without which focus can be lost and the very purpose you exist for many not be realised. Monarch School has a clear vision to break the cycle of poverty through education and they are not ashamed of their approach to realising this vision.

The vision of each organisation I visited was focused, precise and ambitious. Those with razor-sharp vision are unstoppable and the organisations I visited during my fellowship proved this. ***The aim of these schools go beyond passing examinations or getting them to the next stage of education – their aim is also to break cycles of disadvantage, equip people from diverse communities with the tools needed to tackle the world's problems, transform nations and continents, and develop leaders.***

2. ROLE MODEL FACULTY AND STAFF

Role models are imperative in the process of developing leaders, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The leadership development programmes run by the Aleto Foundation are based on the premise of *sharing success with tomorrow's leaders* – this success is shared by role models who come in the form of business leaders, medical professionals, entrepreneurs and peers alike. Many of these role models also come from similar backgrounds to the young people on the leadership programme, which makes the experiences even more impactful for both parties.

In many of the school I visited, the teachers themselves were roles models, not only in the school but also in society more widely. Not only were these teachers role models, they were enthusiastic and deeply passionate about their subject. Many of the teachers in these schools were making a huge impact both in and outside of their classrooms, by creating bespoke teaching materials, writing books and chasing their own dreams. This was particularly found at the Ron Clark Academy.

Case Study: Ron Clark role model teachers

Inspirational teachers at the Ron Clark Academy include **Dr. Valerie Camille Jones**, a Mathematics Teacher, who holds a doctoral degree in Mathematics Education and was honoured with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, which is America's highest honour in mathematics and science for teachers.¹⁶ Visiting her classroom was an experience in itself. Her addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division themed earrings showed that teaching mathematics is more than just a job for her; this is something she is truly passionate about.



¹⁶ <http://www.ronclarkacademy.com/Meet-the-Team>

Another example of an excellent role model found at the Ron Clark Academy is **Brandon P. Fleming**, a History Teacher, who has dedicated his life to ensuring young people understand the importance of education and the opportunities provided by it. This passion stemmed from his personal experience in the education system where he dropped out of college, on an athletics scholarship, after sustaining a serious injury that hindered his progress. After two years out of college and working 12- hour shifts in a factory, he realised his mistake and fortunately gained readmission to college, completing four years of education in just two and a half years.¹⁷ ***When being taught by an inspirational leader, you will learn the lessons from their journey and hopefully apply them to your life.*** Additionally, when teachers are given the space and support to flourish, it has a lasting impact on the students.



From Atlanta, Georgia to Johannesburg, South Africa I met numerous inspirational leaders. Urban Prep Academies prides their schools on in having positive male role models. As the United States' first public charter high school for boys, created to reverse the dreadful graduation and college completion rates among young men, particularly African-American males, Urban Prep has numerous male teachers, mentors, staff and volunteers – many from similar backgrounds to the students – all committed to supporting and acting as positive role models to the young men they serve.¹⁸

¹⁷ <https://www.bpfleming.com/about>

¹⁸ Urban Prep Academies brochure

The importance of alumni

Alumni were hugely important at many of the schools I visited through my fellowship – not only do they provide direct access to role models but they came to give back and contribute to the life of the school, some even as members of staff.

The importance of role models was evident at Starehe Boy's Centre. During my visit, I attended the school's annual Old Boy's day, where alumni return to spend time at the school, inspire, and encourage the students. A politician who was a student at the school many years ago had come back to give the keynote address for the day. You could tell the students were inspired and impacted, not only by his story but also his gratitude to the school that he attributes much of his success to. For young people, knowing you are connected to successful people is extremely encouraging and especially when they started in the same place as you. It makes their dreams look possible and encourages them to work hard. Taking this a step further, having alumni perform the role of mentors for the young people is very impactful – from hearing an inspiring story to learning about the practical tools it took for the alumni leader to get to where they are is transformative.



At Monarch School, quite a few of the staff and teachers were once students in the school. The fact that they were no longer homeless and supporting themselves was clear evidence that the school had impacted their lives for the better. ***Having alumni staff who have been educated through the school is invaluable – they can relate so closely to the experience of current students and provide helpful feedback to improve the way the school runs and contribute to the school fulfilling its vision.***

Supporting alumni

Many of the schools still support students once they have left. At Urban Prep Academies they have the Urban Prep Fellows Program – a program where a previous student who has graduated from college spends one year working across the school's three campuses and corporate office, contributing to innovation, mentoring and acting as role models to current students. These Fellows support the school using their unique perspective as both alumni and staff. In turn, they develop their professional skills and gain a deep insight into the operational side of the school. Furthermore, the school also has an Alumni Program which monitors and supports alumni to help them succeed at college. The school understands that as a result of the boys' backgrounds, their alumni may face unique challenges at university so this program is of key importance. Support comes in the form of assistance with selecting classes, identifying tutors, and also securing access to financial resources – all of which are especially important for young boys who come from the communities served by the school.

At Monarch School, there is an alumni scholarship programme, which supports previous students' education endeavours. Additionally, they provide financial and skill building workshops, and career transition and readiness programmes as many of the alumni struggle at college after leaving the school. Ancillary financial support is also made available to alumni for emergency housing, medical care and transportation needs. So, the support is two way: alumni give back to the school and the school supports alumni after attending the school and this is a huge part of creating community.

3. BESPOKE CURRICULUM

Most of the schools I visited exist to solve a problem and were created to serve a demographic of young people in need, whether on the south side of Chicago, Nairobi or Soweto. In order to serve and ensure the best outcomes for the students, the curriculum needs to be adapted to the group. These schools and programmes were about much more than academics. Thoughtful and intentional adaptations to a regular school curriculum impact students by creating a learning environment conducive to their needs, which in turn enables them to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Academic growth is only one of the four areas of focus for Monarch School – social growth, emotional growth, and life skills are equally as important in their pursuit to break the cycle of poverty through education. The Monarch School website tells us that ‘research shows homelessness contributes to a wide range of challenges including physical and psychological problems, safety fears and academic struggles...The barriers these students face hinder their ability to become contributing, successful members of their families and society and place them at a high risk of becoming tomorrow’s homeless adults.’¹⁹ As a result of the challenges faced by the students walking through the doors of these schools every day, the curriculum needs to be adapted to respond to this and support the students. The entire curriculum at Monarch School is designed to respond to the real challenges the young people at their school face as a result of their background and upbringing.

Monarch School has several practices and initiatives designed to support the unique needs of their students. For instance, the school stays open all year round. For young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, summer breaks can be especially challenging and even more so for young people affected by homelessness.²⁰ Another initiative that struck me is their recently established nutrition lab. When speaking to the nutrition teacher during my visit she told me that they teach students dining etiquette and about different types of food, as many of the students have grown up without a dining table or nutritious meals. Many of the students have spent days hungry but the school has a teaching kitchen and a garden where the students grew their own vegetables. They learn about gardening, cooking and how the foods impact their health. This may not be found at your typical school, but for the propose of educating students impacted by homelessness and equipping them with necessary skills and experiences for personal success – the mission of Monarch School – this is beneficial.

Urban Prep Academies also incorporates a number of special programmes and traditions into their school curriculum, specifically tailored to the African-American boys who attend the school. These are embedded to enable the students to thrive and become college ready. Intentionally chosen music is an integral part of the school curriculum at Urban Prep Academies. This was brought to life when I attended one of the school’s most important rituals that take place every day: community. Community is much like what a school assembly is in the UK but with a specific order of events and many traditions included to set the tone for the day. This contributes to ‘establish[ing] a culture and climate that is positive, structured, and celebratory of young, intelligent Black and Beautiful men, beyond the usual narrative of success for young Black men in this society.’²¹

¹⁹ <http://monarchschoools.org/about/>

²⁰ <https://www.tes.com/news/long-summer-holidays-harm-disadvantaged-pupils-so-scrap-them>

²¹ Urban prep community outline, brochure.

Case Study: Music at Urban Prep Academies

Community begins with Djembe Drumming, which is used in West African countries to call people of the community together. This practice connects the African-American students to their African ancestors and was suggested for inclusion to the Community programme by one of the students in 2009. As Community progresses various hip-hop songs are played for different purposes. For instance, to celebrate the staff and students being physically present for another day of school, Jay-Z's, *A star is born* is played. Some of the lyrics from the chorus include: 'everyday a star is born' 'clap for 'em, clap for 'em, clap for 'em'. The lyrics of this song support the positive messages Urban Prep are trying to communicate to their students: to celebrate their brothers by 'clapping for them' and that through hard work, stars are born. The inclusion of different songs into this daily ceremony is very intentional and the song choices are bespoke.

Another part of Community that struck me is the 'Show your brother some love' segment. The purpose of this section is for the boys to uplift and encourage each other, hug each other and generally show each other love. The Community outline document states that 'it is very important for us to consistently, intentionally and explicitly create a visible and physical counter narrative to what our young men are seeing and hearing regularly outside of our school due to their exposure to violence and other negative experiences.' During the section, uplifting music with a message like *Happy* by Pharrell Williams, *Glory* by Common, or *Before I Let Go* by Frankie Beverly and Maze is played. This section allows the young men to be vulnerable, as they don't have many opportunities to be so. The school believes it is important to have the space to be vulnerable so they create this at the beginning of the day.

Seeing these practices and the way the curriculum in these schools was so tailored to the backgrounds and needs of the students was striking but at the same time made so much sense. Adapting the school curriculum to the experience and culture of the boys made all the difference in enabling the students to thrive and feel a sense of belonging. It also contributed to equipping them with the emotional, social, physical, and academic skills to thrive once they leave the school.

Impact and relevance to the UK

Research tells us that people from ethnic minorities will make up a fifth of Britain's population by 2051, compared with 8% in 2001²² and almost three-quarters of university students from London will be from ethnic minorities by the end of the next decade.²³ With the rising diversity of the UK population, staff will need to understand different cultures, especially where many of the students are from ethnic minority backgrounds. For example, statistics show that 'Black pupils face trebled exclusion rate in some areas of England'.²⁴ Programmes tailored to the backgrounds of these students can be created to support rather than exclude these students. ***Cultural awareness training is essential for teachers, especially in our increasingly diverse nation.***

²² <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/jul/13/uk-population-growth-ethnic-minorities>

²³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-45576261>

²⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-53516009>

4. FOCUS ON WELLBEING

Focus on wellbeing

When working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, a focus on wellbeing is of key importance. Many students in the schools I visited have faced and are facing trauma or difficult circumstances daily. Each school took a different approach to wellbeing – some with counsellors on site, special therapy programmes, and others through sport and tabura (drill training practised at Village Leadership Academy).

At Urban Prep Academies, ten of their West Campus students have been shot and five killed since they opened in 2009.²⁵ Unfortunately, Chicago is notoriously known for gun violence, which has robbed the futures of so many people and Urban Prep Academies is a response to this epidemic. Embedded into the fabric of all they do at Urban Prep is a focus on the wellbeing of the young men – from the annual events and school counsellors, to the strong traditions upheld in the school. Each Urban Prep student has a personal counsellor throughout their time at the school. These practices enable the boys' emotional issues to be addressed, which in turn enables them to excel academically and succeed in their pursuit of gaining university admission.

Case study: Monarch School wellbeing programmes

Monarch school has an extensive wellbeing programme for its students, which addresses both social and emotional growth. The aim of their work in this area is for 'students to be aware and responsive of emotion and practice positive behaviours that contribute to overall health and wellbeing.'²⁶ At Monarch School student wellbeing is approached in the following ways:

Meeting the basic needs of students – students are provided with two meals per day, plus snacks. Additionally, the school has an in-house clothing store called Butterfly Boutique, where students are provided with clothing, shoes, underwear and family-sized toiletries to ensure their basic needs are met. The school also has shower and laundry facilities on-site, which can be used by students and parents alike.

Offering physical health checks – the school has an in-kind partnership with a local health centre, which provides a part-time nurse for the school. Students are offered vision and dental care twice a year.

Therapeutic Arts Programme – this longstanding programme had been in place at Monarch School for 17 years at the time of my visit, so this programme existed at the time when Monarch was still a drop-in learning centre. This shows how integral it is to support the students. The programme 'provides art-based group and individual therapy and community building classes to address students' social and emotional barriers to success.'²⁷ The school also has a music therapist and dance studio for students.

²⁵ Urban Prep Academies Newsletter, 10 December 2018

²⁶ Monarch School Key Focus brochure, p.3.

²⁷ Monarch School Key Focus brochure, p.3.

Relevance to the UK

From the workplace to home to school, we know, and research reveals, the importance of looking after our wellbeing. Most workplaces have a focus on this, from promoting healthy eating to providing on-site massages and access to free therapy through the Employee Assistance Programme, so why not begin earlier by providing outlets and resources for students to look after their wellbeing from a young age and not just at the point where they reach a crisis?

These wellbeing practices enable the students to express and explore their emotions as opposed to keeping them inside. It shows that the school understands where they are coming from and is willing to help them improve and maintain their wellbeing.

Schools in the UK are already supporting students with their wellbeing but usually at the point where a crisis is reached. A positive outcome for the UK would be for schools to have a strong focus on both student and staff wellbeing to enable the better relationships between peers, staff and students and also contribute to academic success. *If students and their teachers are looked after from a wellbeing perspective, it will translate into other areas, including academic attainment.*

5. ACCESS TO TANGIBLE OPPORTUNITIES BY CONNECTING WITH BUSINESS

It is one thing to foster leadership skills in young people within the walls of their school, but the real impact is made when the young people are connected to tangible life-enhancing opportunities where they can exercise the skills and thrive. From the schools and organisations I visited, the real impact was created when they connected to businesses, both local and global. The job of developing leaders from disadvantaged backgrounds would be incomplete without connecting them with opportunities to learn and lead.

The key types of opportunities young people were connected to in the schools and organisations I visited were:

1. Preparation for university and access to scholarships
2. Paid internships
3. Soft skills for the world beyond school

The Urban Prep mission clearly states that it exists ‘to provide a high-quality and comprehensive educational experience to young men that result in our graduates succeeding in college.’²⁸ Their focus has always been on ensuring their students are college-ready and are equipped with the knowledge and skills to thrive once they get there. As a result, the school has a hub dedicated to college preparation where each student is provided with a personal college counsellor who explores college options with the boys, advises on applications and assists them in securing scholarships. Since the school opened the doors of its first campus in 2006, 100% of Urban Prep graduates have been admitted into four-year universities. These included prestigious universities such as Cornell University, Dartmouth University and Morehouse College. In addition to this, the students have received over ten million dollars in grants and scholarships to see them through. The success of their approach cannot be denied and is attributable to their clear mission and razor-sharp vision. Urban Prep is developing leaders from disadvantage backgrounds by actively preparing their students for university. As mentioned in the section about alumni, this support continues once the graduates are at university through the Alumni Program, which provides the support necessary for alumni to thrive at and complete university.

One of Monarch School’s key focus areas is life skills. They believe that ‘part of ending the cycle of poverty includes building students’ life skills. These skills allow students to plan for a life of self-sufficient living.’²⁹ The areas they focus on include college preparation, financial literacy and career exploration. In 2016, Monarch School opened a brand new learning lab called Launch Pointe. ***This \$1.5 million state of the art space, funded by local and global businesses and foundations, is the home of project-based learning and college and career exploration.*** In my research before embarking on my travels, I came across an alumnus of the school – Michael Gaulden – and was honoured to be able to meet him during my visit. Not only was he a product of the great work being done at Monarch School but he was also the Career Development Coordinator who was instrumental in running Launch Pointe. I was able to speak to him about his journey through Monarch School, to studying at the University of California, Los Angeles, to working at Monarch School. At Launch Pointe, students engage with employers, develop skills that prepare them for college, their careers and general for a successful life. This learning hub is a key part of ensuring students have opportunities to

²⁸ Urban Prep Academies Brochure

²⁹ Monarch School website: <http://monarchschoools.org/our-approach/>

overcome the impacts of homelessness.³⁰ The hub has a particular focus on information technology and building and construction. The impact of this is that students develop skills that enhanced their problem solving and critical thinking skills. Additionally, the activities that take place in Launch Pointe encourage team working and innovative exploration – all skills that will enable the students to succeed once they leave Monarch School.

The school has partnered with several local businesses to run the well-established Monarch Internship Program (MIP). This programme provides the students with paid internships, which are undertaken alongside their studies – revealing the school's commitment not only to academic success but also for post-secondary readiness. The program is thoroughly evaluated and monitored for impact and interns are given worksite mentors who receive training from the schools. The impact of MIP is that students leave school with valuable work experience and an opportunity to build their network by establishing a link with a local business.³¹

Case Study: Ron Clark Academy 'The Amazing Shake Competition'

The Ron Clark Academy 'Amazing Shake Competition' is an excellent opportunity for students and 5th and 6th graders around the USA to develop their soft skills. This competition prepares students to thrive in professional settings by teaching them how to give a proper handshake, how to "work a room", how to conduct themselves in an interview and how to remain composed under pressure – skills needed to thrive in the 21st Century. In preparation for the competition, students participate in a number of workshops where they learn these key skills. This competition initially started in the school but has now been rolled out across the United States with local, and district level competitions taking place throughout the year, culminating in a national competition at the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta.

Numerous businesses are involved in the success of the amazing shake competition, boasting sponsors such as Delta Airlines, Coca Cola and Verizon. Students are put through their paces throughout the 3-day competition, consisting of case scenario stations to showcase their poise, charisma, soft skills, and composure under pressure. Students who do not progress through the rounds are given the opportunity to attend workshops conducted by business leaders and professionals – further equipping them with skills needed to thrive when opportunities are presented to them. The competition has been very successful and even has international participants now.³²

Impact and relevance to the UK

The Amazing Shake Competition effectively improves the soft skills of young people, not only at the Ron Clark Academy but also across the USA. This is achieved by engaging with businesses and exposing students to professional settings. This prepares them for future opportunities and making them aware of existing opportunities. A similar programme or competitions could be implemented in the United Kingdom, with schools across the nation taking part and various businesses being involved. This would be a practical and creative way of developing the leadership skills of young people in the UK.

³⁰ <http://monarchschoools.org/launching-career-college-beyond/>

³¹ <https://www.lpainc.com/work/monarch-school-launch-point>

³² <http://www.ronclarkacademy.com/nationals>

6. SPACE FOR PARENTS

For many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, they are coming from homes where their parents may be struggling to make ends meet, may be unemployed or dealing with any number of day-to-day difficulties. Many of the schools I visited did not shy away from this reality – from having a computer lab and hub for parents in the school to visiting students in their homes before they started attending the school, to having special mother-son dances on the annual school calendar. ***The inclusion of parents in school life was bespoke and an integral part of the way many of the schools are run.***

At the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta, incoming students are visited at their home before the school year begins. Ron Clark said this is intentional and part of showing that the school cares about every aspect of the child – they not only care about where they are going and where the school is taking them to but also where they are coming from. This ensures the family and most especially the parents know how important they are to the school and an integral part of the child's success journey. Parents feel as much a part of the Ron Clark Academy as their children who attend the school every day.

Creating space for parents in a school and inviting them to become part of the fabric of the school has a powerful impact. ***Parents at the Ron Clark Academy are required to commit to 40 hours of community service per year so they are regular volunteers at the school.*** Many of the staff shared how involved parents were when they were preparing to open the school and how it would not have opened on the scheduled date if not for the involvement of parents. On my visit, as a participant in the educator's training, there were many volunteers helping to facilitate the day - all of whom were parents. Parents are big volunteers at the Ron Clark Academy and are integrated into many aspects of school life. This is key for community building and is especially important when working with students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Case study: Parent Resource Centre - Monarch School

At the very front of Monarch School, you will find the Parent Resource Centre. The fact that it is at the front and not hidden away shows how important parents are in the Monarch School Community. The school is intentional about involving parents in school life because they know the immense impact this has. The Parent Resources Centre is a spacious room open to parents during opening hours. It has computers for parents to use and space for them to be free. During my tour, KishaLynn Elliot - Director of Programme Evaluation at Monarch School - explained that there are always parents on site. They are as much part of the school as staff and students. The parents also take up different roles within the school such as 'Parent Advocates' for different levels of the school. For example, I met a parent who is a Middle School Advocate. Ms. Elliot also informed me that the school doesn't exist to solve parents' issues with homelessness but is there to provide a space for them to work on themselves and the things that are required to support themselves and their families.

There are many benefits of creating space for parents in a school:

- If parents are supported in addressing issues they are facing, it can have a very positive impact on their child. They will be able to be better parents – financially, emotionally and physically.
- Less conflict and better understanding between the school and parents
- Mutually beneficial – the parents can help with the school's problems and the school can help with the parent's issues.
- Better relations between students, parents and teachers lead to greater transparency and reduce conflict.

All of these outcomes work together for the success of the student.

Impact and relevance to the UK

Creating space for parents and involving them in the life of the school has a very positive impact on students' success. It enables parents to be more engaged in their child's education, which in turn leads to improved attainment, increased attendance and better behaviour – all of which improve educational outcomes.³³ Integrating parents into school life also creates a better understanding between the staff and parents, thus reducing the potential for conflict. Ultimately, creating space for parents in the school enables parents and staff to work together for the success of the child.

The practice of visiting students in their homes before the academic year begins is very effective but there would be challenges to implementation in the UK. Research shows that teachers in the UK are already over worked and work more unpaid overtime than any other profession so adding this extra duty could be challenging.³⁴ There are also health and safety and safeguarding issues that could arise from such a practice so may not be best placed in the UK state school context. This practice may, however, be suitable for much smaller schools in the UK - though, this is not where the most disadvantaged young people are found.

³³https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/how_schools_and_families_can_work_better_together_0.pdf

³⁴<https://www.tes.com/news/teachers-work-more-unpaid-overtime-anyone-else>

7. ENCOURAGE INNOVATION

Going through the process of creating an innovative project allows students to develop their leadership skills. They work together in teams, have to manage their project alongside their studies and other priorities, build confidence, exercise integrity and empathy, and increase self-awareness. Learning these skills is extremely useful and equips the students with skills needed to thrive once they leave school. The schools I visited encouraged innovation in many different ways: from an Entrepreneurial Leadership programme embedded into the curriculum, to making space to create dance routines that turned into viral videos.



Case study: Entrepreneurial Leadership Programme - African Leadership Academy

“The Entrepreneurial Leadership programme at ALA is designed to build the interpersonal and leadership skills that are essential for future agents of positive change. Through this programme, students develop the mindset, approach, and skills necessary to be entrepreneurial leaders on the African continent and beyond. The syllabus includes a variety of teaching methods, including team-based design challenges, guest speakers, mini-lectures, simulations and games, case studies and experiential learning.

The first year syllabus focuses on conceptual frameworks that challenge assumptions and introduce new ideas in both areas of study, skills that are elemental to successful leaders and entrepreneurs, values reinforcement, and personal growth through leadership coaching. The year culminates in the Original Idea for Development Incubator where students bring to market ideas for change that align with their passions and skills.

During their second year, students run a for-profit or non-profit venture on the ALA campus in teams of 5-7 students through the Student Enterprise Programme. This programme allows ALA's students to put the first-year curriculum into practice by simulating real-life business scenarios. Students manage and lead teams of 5-7 students, reporting annually to boards of directors comprised of working professionals and bring their budgets to an Investment Committee to execute a project that has a direct impact on the ALA community."³⁵

The first thing I encountered when I entered the ALA campus was two students on a stand outside, selling products from their business, Yellow Shea. I was incredibly impressed by their professionalism and the initiative they took to set up a stand for their products on a day when they knew many people would be visiting the campus. This business was the product of the Entrepreneurial Leadership programme.

Encouraging innovation and providing space for entrepreneurial activity in schools broadens students' horizons. When I spoke to ALA students about their steps after leaving the school, I didn't get typical answers. Some told me they were taking a gap year to continue working on the business they began whilst at school, while others were going to top universities across the globe. *Allowing space for innovation allows students to explore parts of themselves they may not uncover in the typical classroom setting.* It is also an opportunity to get them out of their comfort zones and challenge themselves. It may not lead to multimillion-pound ventures but the skills and experience gained from the process can positively impact their futures. Learning how to work in a team, turn ideas into something tangible, learn how to budget and manage responsibilities on top of their studies are invaluable experiences.

At the Ron Clark Academy, innovation is encouraged in a very different way. The centrepiece of the school is a giant slide, which sets the tone of the school and exemplifies their aim to revolutionise education. Everything about the Ron Clark Academy is innovative and this is encouraged in the students, too. A quick Google search of the Ron Clark Academy will return results of YouTube videos of Ron Clark students, as well as Ron Clark himself expertly executing dance moves to songs they have originally made.

Impact and relevance to the UK

An entrepreneurial leadership program, or at least aspects of it, can certainly be embedded in school curriculums in the UK. Organisations such as Young Enterprise have been providing enterprise education to schools since 1962. In light of this, the recommendation would be for schools to engage more with such organisations that embed key leadership skills in students.

³⁵ <http://www.africanleadershipacademy.org/programs/diploma/academics/>

8. CULTURALLY AWARE TEACHERS AND STAFF

The staff and faculty at the schools I visited were very ethnically diverse. The majority of the student population of the Ron Clark Academy, African Leadership and Urban Prep Academy was black, and this reflected in the staff and faculty. At Monarch School and Starehe Boy's School, a number of the staff and teachers were from similar backgrounds to the students and some of them were even alumni. This was a key and very impactful practice observed while visiting the various schools.

*Findings by researchers from Johns Hopkins University and American University have shown that 'having one black teacher in elementary school not only makes children more likely to graduate high school—it also makes them significantly more likely to enrol in college.'*³⁶ This is termed 'the role model effect'. Having a same-race teacher has positive impacts that transcend beyond the classroom. These schools understand the impact of having teachers that reflect the ethnic diversity of the students they are teaching. This does not mean every teacher and staff member needs to be come from the same background. It does, however, mean that it is important for the staff and faculty to understand and be aware of the background of the students they are interacting with on a daily basis.

Beyond innovation, what the Ron Clark Academy has done is to create an environment for the students to truly be themselves. Ron Clark stated in a New York Times video that 'when kids know that you are willing to meet them where they are, and you're willing to learn about their culture and to interact with them positively - they're going to respect you more and they're going to work harder.'³⁷ This is crucial when seeking to develop leaders from disadvantaged backgrounds through education.

Where there are barriers to ensuring the faculty is as ethnically diverse as the student body, training can be put in place. Ron Clark Academy runs a professional development experience called: Culturally Relevant Teaching: Demystifying the Margins. This experience 'delves into creating a school culture that promotes understanding of the intersectionality of race and culture.' The session outline states:

"Engage in meaningful discussions and leave with a deeper understanding of how to support diverse students while avoiding words, deeds, and even lessons that can be deemed inappropriate or offensive. If you teach students who do not look like you OR if you are the "minority" teacher in your school, then this workshop is definitely one for you!"³⁸

Staff and faculty do not only need to have an understanding of the background the students are from but they also need to have an interest and passion for working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. When applying for a job, a company looks for candidates that show a keen interest in the industry and the work the company does. This should not be any different when recruiting staff to work in a school – especially when the students are from disadvantage backgrounds. On the Aleto leadership programme, it is not enough for the mentors and speakers to be black or from a similar background to the young people. They must also want to help and understand where the young people are coming from. The teaching qualifications should not be all schools are looking form when recruiting

³⁶ <https://hub.jhu.edu/2018/11/12/black-students-black-teachers-college-gap/>

³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm8edbBHUiQ>

³⁸ <https://web.cvent.com/event/23ed09d9-743a-48ba-9166-6ce255fabeef/summary>

staff to work in schools with students from disadvantaged backgrounds – it is a disservice to the students.

Relevance to the UK

As seen at the Ron Clark Academy, Village Leadership Academy and also at Urban Prep Academies, it is so important and beneficial for schools to allow students to truly express themselves and embrace their culture. This drives innovation and forms the foundation of great leadership - knowing who you are and being comfortable in it. To allow students to truly be themselves at school, staff and teachers need to understand where the students are coming from, particularly their culture. In the UK, this can begin with cultural awareness training for staff and teachers in schools, especially where the student body is predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds. It is well known that there is a shortage of ethnic minority and especially black teachers in UK schools, so a good solution would be to educate teachers on the culture and background of the students they are teaching. This will enable teachers and staff to engage with them more positively and result in better educational outcomes. If students feel they are understood and teachers have taken time to learn about their background - they feel valued, and being valued leads to more positive engagement.

Programmes like the Aleto leadership programme understand the 'role model effect' and are very successful in raising the aspirations of young people of black heritage in the UK. Organisations such as the Amos Bursary are doing the same through providing scholarship and mentoring to talented men of African and Caribbean descent. Professional programmes such as SEO London and Rare Recruitment are doing similar work by training and coaching young people from disadvantaged background to access roles in top professions in the UK. Further funding and support of such programmes is a key way to develop leaders from disadvantaged backgrounds in the UK.

9. FUNDING

Most of the schools I visited were private and not-for-profit and a number of them were fee paying, which meant students had to rely on scholarships and the schools went to great lengths to raise funds for the many bespoke and innovative programmes they offer. Partnering with local and global businesses not only gave students and opportunity to experience the world of work and develop leadership skills, but was also a source of funding for many of the school activities. The Ron Clark Academy has partnerships with Delta and the Cocoa Cola Foundation that sponsor the school's excellent work.

A practice that stood out to me while visiting Starehe Boys' School was the creation of endowments funds for students. The vice principal of the school explained that alumni would get together and put money in an endowment fund to create access to education for students coming after them. I was fascinated by this and went into further research.



Over the years, alumni had created a number of endowments meaning the funding was sustainable and always available for students in need. Starehe Boys' School was created for disadvantaged young boys and is one of the best schools in Kenya. It is incredible that funding is not a barrier to accessing a quality education at Starehe, due to these endowment funds that have been set up over the years. Similarly, At Ron Clark Academy, partnerships with various sponsors ensure funding is not a barrier to any student accepted to the school.

Relevance to the UK

The cost of higher education in the UK has greatly increased over the past decade, but the rise in scholarship funding has not increased at the same rate. More than ever before, students considering university seriously need to weigh up the cost and debt they are entering into. The rise of apprenticeships as an alternative to university has been a very positive outcome. However, for the many students who do wish to attend university, there are so few scholarships. *In the UK, universities can mobilise the private sector and philanthropists to create scholarship funds that enable to most disadvantaged students to access quality education.*

10. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are leadership skills sold separately?

Through this Fellowship, I sought to learn how schools and organisations around the world are developing leaders from disadvantaged backgrounds, through education. When embarking on the Fellowship, I thought I would go to schools and observe specific leadership development programmes y added on to curriculums but what I encountered was so much more – it was embedded.

I learnt that leadership skills don't need to be taught in a separate classroom or a special leadership programme. Many of the schools I visited were developing leaders without a specific leadership programme per se. Learning leadership skills is embedded into everything they do – the teaching methods, the extracurricular programmes, how the students are treated and disciplined, who the students are taught by and so much more. Leadership development was not something sold separately and leadership isn't taught in a classroom. It was found when students were given an opportunity to start a business, travel to a new country, conduct an independent research project, or enter a dance competition. By the schools' very design, they were developing leaders.

Leaders are raised not specifically through doing a leadership development course, but by being given opportunities to be challenged, create something new, get out of their comfort zone, and be nurtured. This was clearly seen in all of the schools I visited through my Fellowship. A school doesn't need to be a leadership academy to develop leaders; it is the practices and principles used that develop students into leaders.

Separate or all together?

This Fellowship is specifically focused on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds but not all of the schools I visited were exclusively for such students. It made me question what the best model for impacting the lives of disadvantaged young people is. Is it best to have programmes separately and specifically for these groups or is it better to have students from different backgrounds brought together? I saw both models work very well across the schools I visited. Starehe Boy's School was an interesting example as the school was initially started for boys in need, but the excellent education they were providing meant those from more affluent backgrounds also wanted to attend. At present, the school is mixed with both boys on scholarships and those paying fees. The Ron Clark Academy isn't specifically for disadvantaged students but a large percentage of students at the school receive financial aid so there is not a barrier to students attending due to their background. This is the same for the African Leadership Academy, which has a large scholarship programme and admits students regardless of their financial status. *Access to quality education is key.*

Monarch School operates a different model where all of the students are experiencing homelessness and similarly, at Urban Prep Academies the vast majority of students are from low-income households and are African-American. This model also works very well and great transformations are made among the students and many leaders have been developed.

In conclusion, the schools I visited show that focusing solely on disadvantaged students can work as effectively as bringing them together with students that are not disadvantaged – it just depends on the vision of the school and the issues they are addressing.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Through this Fellowship, I achieved the aims set out by learning various methods and models school and organisations use to develop leaders from disadvantaged backgrounds. The key elements being:

1. Razor-sharp vision
2. Role model faculty and staff
3. Focus on wellbeing
4. Adapt curriculum to demographic
5. Connected to business
6. Space for parents
7. Encourage innovation
8. Culturally aware teachers
9. Funding

My findings are encouraging, as they relate to the UK, since some of what I observed is being practised in UK schools already. For example, schools such as School 21 in London recruit recent graduates in the role of Student Achievement Coach, not only to improve the academic attainment of the students in numeracy and literacy but also to act as role models for them. This role is successful in improving both the academic and leadership skills of the students and can be adopted in other schools across the UK.

I learnt new practices, such as the involvement of parents in the life of the school. Encouraging them to volunteer at the school and get involved in the life of the school – from refurbishments to volunteering at open days. Having allocated space for parents in schools is something new that can be brought back to schools in the UK.

The schools I visited were private not-for-profits schools and often quite small in size. This meant time and resources could be allocated to students more generously and special programmes could be implemented with more ease than would be possible with large numbers of students. As a result, one of the key challenges to implementing some of the practices from my findings would be trying to implement them at large state schools, where most disadvantaged students in the UK are educated.

Recommendations

1. Schools should create visions beyond academic attainment and think about the impact they want their young people to have grades.
 - Schools can think about the impact they want their students to have on the local and wider communities.
2. Access to role models from the community.
3. Curriculums should be tailored to incorporate elements of the student's culture.
4. Have a focus on wellbeing at schools and teach students to build healthy wellbeing habits.
 - Teach students how to look after themselves as a whole, not just academically.
 - And the wellbeing of teachers and staff should always be of high importance.
5. Equip young people with soft skills that are needed to thrive once they leave school.

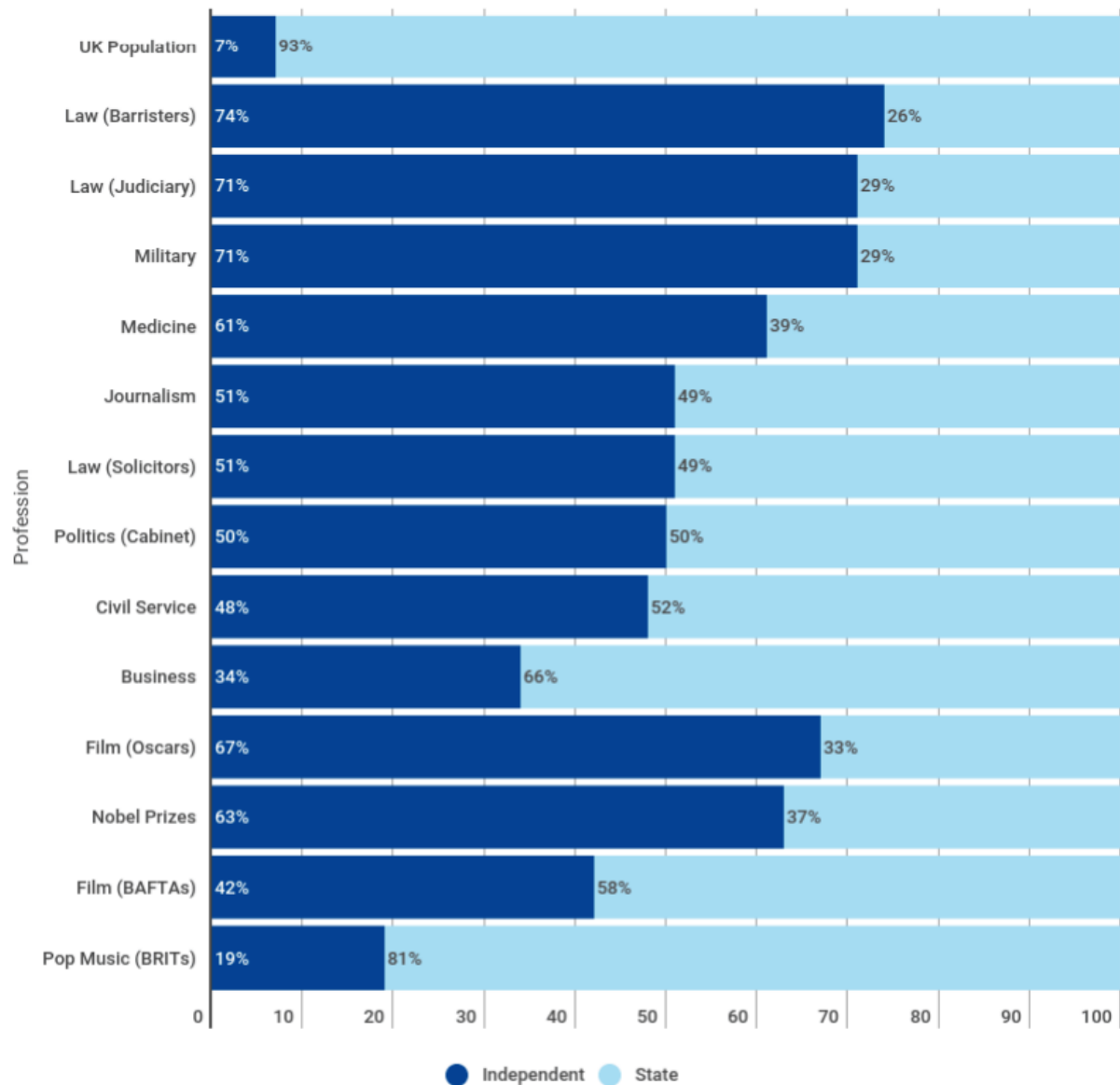
- This can be done through a national competition, much like the Ron Clack Academy's Amazing Shake Competition or by creating a partnership with a local company for work experience opportunities.
- 6. Embed parents into the school community.
 - Create a space or programmes to get parents involved in the life of the school beyond parents' evening.
- 7. More funding for existing programmes such as the Aleto Foundation that are developing the leadership potential of disadvantaged young people in the UK.
- 8. Work with organisations to enable students to develop their leadership skills by creating a business.
- 9. Create scholarships for students to access quality educational opportunities by creating endowments funds for disadvantaged groups.
- 10. Cultural awareness training for staff and teachers in schools
 - Especially where the student body is predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds.

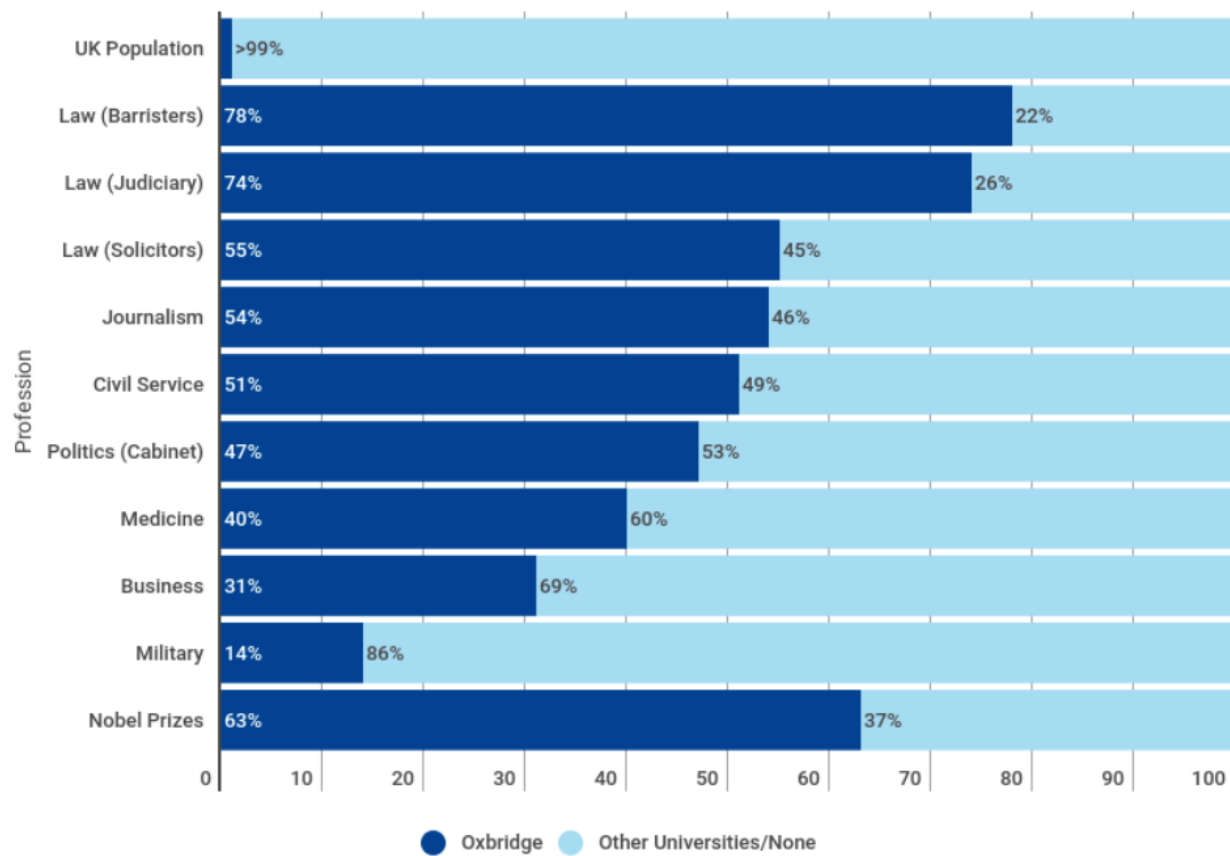
Next steps

- Cultural awareness and anti-racism training is an immediate next step and something that can be implemented in schools across the nation, beginning with schools in the most ethnically diverse areas.
 - Partner with organisations such as Business in the Community to deliver cultural awareness and anti-racism training to teachers across the UK.
- Develop a leadership development programme or curriculum for young people that can be embedded in state schools, targeting schools in the most deprived boroughs in the UK.
- Leadership development centres for young people to attend after school.
- Establish endowment funds for disadvantaged groups and top universities, starting with my alma mater, University of Oxford.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Social Mobility Statistics





Appendix 2: Travel Itinerary

USA	
Week 1 1 st – 7 th May: San Diego	Monarch Schools, San Diego
Week 2 8 th - 14 th May: Chicago	Urban Prep Academy, Chicago Village Leadership Academy
Week 3 15 th - 22 nd May: Atlanta	Ron Clark Academy, Atlanta
Johannesburg and Nairobi	
Week 1 20 th June - 28 th June: Johannesburg	Kliptown Youth Program Africa Leadership Academy
Weeks 2 & 3 28 th June - 12 th July: Nairobi	Zawadi Africa Education Fund Starehe Boys' Centre

Appendix 2: Index of organisations visited

1. Monarch School in San Diego
<https://monarchschoools.org/>
2. Urban Prep Academies in Chicago
<http://www.urbanprep.org/>
3. Village Leadership Academy in Chicago
<https://www.vlacademy.org/>
4. The Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta
<http://www.ronclarkacademy.com/>
5. Kiptown Youth Program in Johannesburg
<https://www.kiptownyouthprogram.org.za/>
6. African Leadership Academy in Johannesburg
<http://www.africanleadershipacademy.org/>
7. Starehe Boy's School in Nairobi
<http://www.stareheboyscentre.ac.ke/sbc/>
8. Zawadi Africa in Nairobi
<http://www.zawadiafrica.org/>