

Futures Skills Award Reflection



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Small Things are The Big Things.....

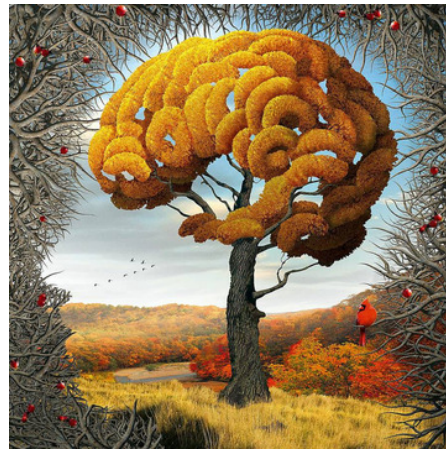
In high school, I studied Biology where among a diverse range of words and scientific terms, Osmosis became sticky to me.

Osmosis is a concept that explains the passive movement (it doesn't waste energy) of water from a less concentrated to a more concentrated solution, through a partially permeable membrane of our cells. This means that automatically, our body balances himself. And I believe this simple word reflects us: we live osmotically. Every single thing we do, every interaction we have, every clubs and challenge we join and face are all part of a bigger process: finding our harmony.

When I first heard about the Futures Skills Award, it was the confirmation needed for me to act like the water: start to be involved in activities to in the end of the day, start to live. And this was the disposition chosen for Myshowcase template: each square represents a cell.

Since the first day I enrolled in MMU I wanted to participate in every workshop I possibly could not only as a help support for future events like "Presenting Your Portfolio at Interview", but to learn more. Exploring different subjects from "Networking", "Using Emotional Intelligence to Succeed", to "Public Speaking", has been literally broadened my horizons.

Besides just being in my first university year, this is the perfect time to start to draw my path as an individual and as a professional. Studying and living abroad in the United Kingdom, allows me to develop my English skills and be nested in a new culture. English has a germanic root different from the Portuguese that derives from the Latin (introduced by the Romans). However, it is interesting to notice that some words in English can be built from Latin roots like *língua*=language, *pirata*=pirate; *schola*=school or *respirar*=respire.



Global citizenship is a concept which has gained relevance through the years. It means that we are more than just our country citizens. We are world citizens. I defend this notion because the barriers have been broken and freedom of movement is real. In order to us to be able to do this, we have to learn languages besides our own. And this is pretty much the definition I give for language learning.

Nevertheless, "*Knowledge does not occupy space*" as an old Portuguese proverb says. So I decided to enrol in a mini-language course offered by the FSA programme and started to learn another language: Mandarin. Among the available languages, I chose Mandarin because it will be helpful professionally for my future (even though I have just learned simple lines), and I also thought it would be very interesting to choose a language radically different from mine.

In this 10-hour course, we learned the Pinyin system and the four tones; the Zodiac; introduction to Chinese characters; greetings; personal information (name, countries, nationality); occupations; directions and how to order simple food and drinks in a restaurant.

Additionally, I am excited to learn another: Spanish. This language will also benefit me in my future and viewed from a Portuguese speaker perspective, it is very easy to learn. Plus, I have a Brazilian friend who is also learning and we practice it together.



Considering myself a very observant person, everywhere I go I always try to find patterns in things and see all the details to reach some kind of conclusion. I immediately related this to analytical thinking: a skill defined as the ability to solve problems, which is continuously improved.

Our life is made of a massive number of choices. Go or stay, sleep or get up, A, or B. And we need to be prepared. Whatever we choose, the right or wrong answer can make a difference. Having the analytical thinking skill is being ready for different scenarios. It is an essential challenge not just for the professional environment but for any circumstance that requires a decision or just, a simple observation.

This started with chess in secondary school where all game moves are specially chosen. At MMU, I found a new thing: the Leadership Programme. It is impossible to not get out of every session with different questions on how can I make that work for me, how can I learn more about being a leader, listen to others, act like one and learn more about it.

Through this programme, I am not just focused on creating myself as a leader but to get to know things I would not notice if no one told me. For example, the “Better Decision Making” session explored how hidden messages are included in our daily life: watches are advertised at 10 past 10 creating a happy face (I particularly enjoyed this session because it was related to Marketing) or, “Building Confidence for Success”: when extending our arm behind our back until the maximum point faced to a wall with our eyes open and closed. With our eyes closed our arm reaches a further point than when we’re looking at it. This is because our subconscious is stronger than us while our conscious mind limits us.

Ethics is a very important part of Leadership, and I could connect it to the other skill I chose: Sustainability Awareness.

Since a very young age, I showed my interest in sustainability from treating my grandmother's plants to reuse paper sheets my colleagues used to throw away to the rubbish bucket (after a certain time they start to give me the paper they did not want anymore, thank god).

Living in a society that each day becomes increasingly more consumerist and does not think about the consequences, that started to represent a challenge to me as a future marketer.

I participated in the Sustainability Walk where Jack Christian said a quote that summed up all journey: '*Nature can live without us but we cannot live without nature*'. We need Nature to live, to feed ourselves, to make materials out of it, to everything. Nature, on the other hand, is independent and can live by herself with its own spirit. Every place we passed through had some negative impact on the environment, even more, that Manchester was the first world industrial city.

Not only I learned more about sustainability (looking at the real impacts like pollution), but equally learned about the city I am living in now. And people as another component besides the environment in sustainability, should be part of the definition since it is also a social responsibility.

A week after the walk, I booked an event called The Carbon Literacy Project. I would not have the idea that a simple event would have an impact in my life after that day. Through activities such as identifying responsible countries and industries for Earth warming and deforestation, I became to know that consumerism and eating meat are real issues. Thus, I started to practice the flexitarian diet: "*a plant-based diet with the occasional addition of meat*" (Flexitarian, 2017). I called it: eat healthier thinking greener. I had truly thought it was going to be difficult to replace meat, but there is a new world of alternatives with many websites that share innovative recipes, and now I only eat meat one or two times a week.

Also, this year I am challenging myself by putting all my material life inside one suitcase reducing my personal consumption. This made me gain a new mentality: why do we hoard so much if in the end what matters is our spiritual life as humans in a global society?

And that took me to another point: volunteering. It was another event I had not any idea what to expect and it revealed to be very intriguing: youth loneliness. In a social media connected society, people (especially young) still feel lonely. In this first step to start helping, I had a basic reporter lesson given my @EdLabs in partnership with 42nd Street, on how to approach people to, in the end, gather their opinions and find the causes and explanations to this problem.

Professionally, I have already found the professional area I aspire to work in: Tourism Marketing. Tourism Marketing cares basically about capturing the consumers into the hospitality/ travel net. And, to be even more interesting, this year is the International Year for Sustainable Tourism. It focuses on the importance of Tourism in people's lives: it has the power of change through economic growth, social inclusiveness and recognition of cultural values, diversity and heritage. This made me very happy to have chosen these 3 skills: learn a language (a door to another culture), develop analytical thinking (required in Marketing) and finally be sustainability aware.



However, these skills are not independent of each other. They include more in them: team work, decision making, creativity, networking, honesty, or commercial awareness, among others.

In a more competitive world, I realise now that most importantly, is not having just a degree to prove we are suitable or aware of a certain job. It is necessary to each day incorporate something new in us capable of making the difference out there because that is what employers are looking for: people who can think for themselves and make the change.

For me, the Futures Skills programme was a push to shape myself. I noticed that I have become more confident through every activity, workshop and people I have met.

It also provided me with the motivation and security enough to try volunteering and start to look for my first part-time job as a way of supporting myself while studying.

I do not consider it a finished “thing” because it represents almost a friend who gives me new opportunities to cultivate my potential. It is so, one more cell for my osmotic world.

