

Opinion **MBA blog**

A poster team for diversity

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Right after a grueling two weeks, I packed my bags and left on a trip to Dubai. It was a perfect way to end the term: traveling to a country considered to be a popular tourist destination. However, I had to delay my vacation a few more days because my main purpose of flying there was to participate in the regional finals of the Hult Prize, an annual business case challenge.



The theme of the challenge this year was to address the early childhood education gap in urban slums. There were five of us in the team and we were thrilled to represent our business school in this prestigious event, which features more than 20,000 teams worldwide. This also meant a lot of hard work to come up with a business plan strong enough to compete in this talented arena.

I referred to my team as the Hult Prize ‘poster team’ due to our diverse set of backgrounds. Our team members came from five different countries: Taiwan, Guatemala, Germany, India, and the Philippines and had a variety of professional expertise, such as banking and finance, sales and marketing, operations, technology and education.

Most of the members I had never worked with before. This opportunity to mix is another benefit of the MBA. Since a natural tendency of people is to stick with a group they are used to or one that is similar to them, the programme provides students with extracurricular projects and competitions that create additional chances to meet and build lasting friendships with people outside one’s typical circle and the classroom setting. This is vital for any professional in the corporate world, wherein you are often pushed out of your comfort zone to deal with countless individuals and difficult personalities.



The Hult Prize experience was a significant learning experience for me. The fact that we were a diverse team was an advantage in the sense that we were able to cover a lot of ground due to our range of backgrounds. I definitely learned a lot from the constant group meetings and discussions with my teammates, regarding the case and how to polish our business model. We also had a chance to participate on a panel discussion and watch presentations by the other competing teams. With this, we were given the opportunity to voice out our views regarding their business plans – which ones were good, which ones needed some tweaking and so on, as well as respond to the views of the other panel participants. It was a good way to exercise our brains and engage in intellectual interactions with other students from all over the world.

After the competition finished – the University of Toronto was eventually awarded as winner of the Dubai Regional Finals – one of the most rewarding outcomes was the opportunity to explore Dubai with my team, without the stress of studying and working on the project.

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