

Institution: Queen Mary University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 17 Business and Management Studies		
Title of case study: Increasing gender and ethnic diversity on UK corporate boards and in senior leadership		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Elena Doldor (Lead) Dr Doyin Atewologun	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Reader in Organizational Behaviour Senior Lecturer in Leadership and Organizational learning	Period(s) employed: Sept 2012–present July 2013-Oct 2018
Period when the impact occurred: 2012-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Research by Dr Doldor and Dr Atewologun has shaped national policy on women on boards (WoB) and sectoral practice on ethnic diversity in senior leadership in UK businesses. Following an investigation of women's under-representation on FTSE 350 boards and interventions, their work has resulted in the widespread adoption of voluntary gender targets for boards and has increased gender balance on them as a result. Consequently, Doldor's reports have influenced national policies concerning women leaders, including the UK government and FTSE-endorsed Davies and Hampton-Alexander reviews. In turn, following their examination of ethnic diversity in leadership within a 'Big 4' professional services firm (EY), Doldor and Atewologun's research has informed more inclusive leadership development practices within the company (including increased engagement and retention for 100+ ethnic minority leaders) and across the wider professional services sector. As a result of this work, EY has developed new pipelines of board talent.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The research underpinning this case examined the causes and proposed corrective interventions for the under-representation of women and ethnic minorities on boards and in senior leadership.</p>		
Gender diversity on boards and in senior leadership		
<p>In 2015 Doldor co-authored the official annual UK census of women on FTSE 350 boards (Female FTSE Report - FFR) [5.1]. Significantly, this featured a quantitative index (derived from secondary data), monitoring board composition (by gender, size, director role, age, experience, nationality), and qualitative studies (primary data harnessed from 75 interviews and five case studies), investigating the change factors (CEOs, Chairmen, policy-makers, diversity experts), policies and organisational practices promoted by national WoB reviews. These included those by Davies between 2011 and 2015 [5.5], and by Hampton-Alexander from 2016 to 2020 [5.6]. Doldor's research was collaboratively produced with Vinnicombe (Cranfield) and Sealy (Exeter), although she led the qualitative studies in key reports [5.1-5.3] on inclusive talent management, voluntary gender targets [3.5, 5.2], and directors' leadership trajectories [5.3]. Her ensuing research critically examined the possibilities and limits of voluntary strategies for gender equality on boards promoted by national reviews [3.2]. Other studies (with Wyatt and Silvester) examined gender bias in leadership development practices below boards [3.1]. Three key findings emerged from the integrated analysis of firm-level gender trends, organizational practices and national policies:</p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UK's 'business-led voluntary approach' such as threat of mandatory quotas and 'soft quotas' (the Davies Reviews recommended a voluntary gender target of 25% WoB) is ineffective without institutional pressure. Internal organizational gender targets below board-level also provide a disciplined approach to correcting gender bias in talent management processes [3.2]. 		

2. Institutional change for WoB is shaped jointly by multiple stakeholders, including academics who enable the collective gestation of ideas reframing explanations for lack of WoB, from an assumed lack of qualified women, to biased board selection processes [3.3]; and head-hunters who make board selection more gender inclusive by responding opportunistically to change driven by committed actors (such as those identified by the Davies reviews) [3.4].
3. The lack of women in executive roles below boards is an enduring challenge [3.2]; biased leadership development processes account for the gender gap in leadership [3.1].

Ethnic diversity in senior leadership

Based on their recognised expertise in diversity and leadership, Doldor and Atewologun (with Wyatt) were commissioned by EY to examine the under-representation of BAME individuals in Partnership (the most senior leadership role in professional services firms). A mix-method study (involving interviews with 55 White, Asian and Black male and female consultants; interviews and focus groups with 18 Partners, HR professionals, Senior Managers and Directors; and analysis of 10-year HR data of 3,500 employees) examined career progression to Partnership in the firm [3.6]. Findings demonstrated that:

1. The journey to Partnership entails a leadership identity shift from 'individual technical expert', to 'relationship manager' and to 'emerging Partner', a process enabled by established Partners through socialisation and gate-keeping processes.
2. Different career capitals (knowing how, knowing whom and knowing why) are essential for success at different career stages. Ethnicity, gender and social class shape access to acquisition and transformation of different career capitals, hindering leadership progression. There is limited ability to articulate the impact of race on the accumulation of career capitals ('race fluency').

3. References to the research

[3.1] Doldor, E., Wyatt, M., & Silvester, J. (2019). Statesmen or cheerleaders? Using topic modeling to examine gendered messages in narrative developmental feedback for leaders. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 30(5), 101308. doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.101308

[3.2] Doldor, E. (2017). UK: The merits and shortcomings of a voluntary approach. In Seierstad, C., Gabaldon, P., & Mensi-Klarbach, H. (Eds.), *Gender diversity in the boardroom* (pp. 13-44). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57273-4_2

[3.3] Sealy, R., Doldor, E., Vinnicombe, S., Terjesen, S., Anderson, D., & Atewologun, D. (2017). Expanding the notion of dialogic trading zones for impactful research: The case of women on boards research. *British Journal of Management*, 28(1), 64-83. doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12203

[3.4] Doldor, E., Sealy, R., & Vinnicombe, S. (2016). Accidental activists: Headhunters as marginal diversity actors in institutional change towards more women on boards. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 26(3), 285-303. doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12107

[3.5] Vinnicombe, S., Doldor, E., & Turner, C. (2014). The female FTSE board report 2014: crossing the finish line. <http://dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk/handle/1826/8365>

[3.6] Atewologun, D., Doldor, E., Wyatt, M. and Maharaj, A. (2016). Charting the course to Partnership. Confidential report produced for EY [available to REF panel as confidential document]

4. Details of the impact

Shaping national policy on women on boards and in leadership

Doldor's research has been frequently cited in key reviews of women on boards and in leadership roles by Davies (2011-2015) [5.6] and Hampton-Alexander (2015-2020) [5.5]. The reviews instigated transformative national-level policies by requiring UK FTSE 350 companies to adopt

voluntary gender targets, substantially improving gender balance in corporate leadership. From 2013-2020, across FTSE100, the share of women on boards (WoB) increased from 17.3% to 34.5% (increase prior to Davies was from 11% to 15% between 2007 and 2012). Across FTSE 350, 350+ new female directors were appointed, and all-male boards dropped from 74 to 1.

Research by Doldor and co-authors shaped these policies by providing insights into senior women's career obstacles and by supporting the case for voluntary gender targets on boards and below. National policymakers promoting these reviews endorsed Doldor's research, evidenced by the reports' forewords from Government Equalities Office and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills ministers (Maria Miller, Vince Cable, Nicky Morgan and Lucy Neville-Rolfe). The research [3.5, 5.1] was cited in all of the Davies reports (2013-2015) and was regularly shared with the members of the Davies Committee (of which co-author Vinnicombe was member). Doldor led several qualitative studies within the FFRs that cemented the case for targets:

- 2014 on inclusive talent management [3.5, p.32-44]: evidenced metrics and targets as effective practice to increase gender balance across organizational ranks.
- 2015 on national change actors in the field [5.1, p.34-48]: underscored the importance of targets and ongoing challenges for women below boards. Consequently, the closing 2015 Davies Report noted that despite substantive progress for WoB, future policy should focus on targets for women executives below boards.
- 2016 and 2020 [5.2, p.43-59 and p.26-43 respectively]: examined challenges and opportunities when using voluntary targets on boards and below. Sir Philip Hampton, Chairman of the Hampton-Alexander review (which replaced those conducted earlier by Davies), was guest speaker at the 2016 and 2020 report launches, concurring with the reports' suggestions.

In 2016, Doldor was invited to provide advisory input into Hampton-Alexander consultations and subsequently feedback on the review's initial report before publication [5.5], shaping recommendations 1 and 2 of the review. The Deputy Director, Government Equalities Office, testified:

'Dr Doldor has provided advice to organizations and policy-makers, helping to influence policy on this issue'; her work 'has informed national-level recommendations made by the Hampton-Alexander Review in November 2016 (the review advised that FTSE companies adopt voluntary gender targets on boards and at Executive Committee level). Dr Doldor was one of the few academics invited to contribute to a roundtable consultation held by the Hampton-Alexander Review.' [5.4]

The 2016 Hampton-Alexander Review set more ambitious targets for WoB (33%, compared to the 25% Davies target) and introduced targets of 33% for women below boards (on Executive Committees) by 2020. The review also underscored the importance of inclusive headhunting practices, as investigated by Doldor [3.4]. The closing 2020 Hampton-Alexander Review report (published Feb 2021 due to COVID delays) featured input from Doldor on the importance of targets (p. 12) the only academic quoted in the report [5.5].

Doldor's research is also used by employers seeking to achieve gender balance leadership pipelines. She was invited (2018-2019) to provide input at Government Equalities Office policy events and into their 'Women's Progression in the Workplace' employer toolkit [5.7]; and to host a webinar attended by 177 employers, 53% of whom stated that they are likely to change their diversity practices based on Doldor's research insights [3.1; 3.5; 5.3]. Doldor and co-authors (Wyatt and Silvester) are developing their research [3.1] into a practitioner toolkit for female leadership development through unbiased feedback. Seven employers signed up to pilot the toolkit in 2020. Doldor was invited by the Chartered Management Institute (2020) to share research on voluntary targets during an online event attended by 300+ managers. This activity demonstrates sustainability of impact.

Doldor's research informed public debate on gender equality through media coverage (CNN, BBC, BBC Radio Four, The FT, The Guardian, HR Magazine) [5.8], and invited advisory roles (European Parliament 2013; Professional Women's Network Romania 2015; Harvard Business School 2016).

Shaping organizational & sectoral practice on ethnic diversity in senior leadership

The above-mentioned national policies promoting diversity targets shaped how leading professional services firms nurture diversity in their leadership (a pipeline of FTSE board candidates). Doldor and Atewologun (with Wyatt) investigated gender and ethnicity in career trajectories at EY, a world-leading professional services. Their research [3.6] informed tools used by HR and Partners and three major initiatives on diversity in leadership within EY [5.9]:

- *Future Leaders' Programme* targets the 'knowing whom' and 'why' research findings. Aspiring, high potential BAME leaders felt that the programme enabled career development (90%) and developed effective leadership skills (87% vs 70% at baseline), career-enhancing positive political skills (80% vs 49% baseline), and self-awareness (100% vs 81% at baseline).
- *Allies Workshops* addresses limited 'race fluency' identified by the research, with non-BAME staff pivotal in making the culture more inclusive. Allies found the programme useful (94%) and became more confident about tackling race at work (64% vs 50% at baseline): 'I am better prepared to talk about race more openly'.
- *Career Watch* pairs BAME managers with Partners who become sponsors, addressing the 'knowing-whom' research findings. The programme won the 2018 Employers' Network for Equality and Inclusion 'Tapping into Talent' award for 'demonstrable impact on retention, promotion and performance of our high potential diverse future leaders'.

As a result, the equalities campaign group Race for Opportunity named EY a top 10 organisation for their approach to ethnic diversity. EY are rolling out these diversity practices with clients (e.g. UK government, the financial sector): 'We have found the dual approach from this research, that targets action for the minority and broader cultural change for the majority has been highly effective. So much so that we are sharing our experience with our clients.' (Diversity & Inclusion Manager, EY) [5.9]. The research [3.6] was used as evidence by the national Parker Review who recommended voluntary ethnicity targets for FTSE 350 boards [5.10]; Atewologun was academic advisor on the review. EY itself adopted voluntary targets for Partnership representation (40% women and 20% BAME by 2025).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Gender diversity on boards and in senior leadership

[5.1] [Report] Vinnicombe, S., Doldor, E., & Sealy, R. (2015). The Female FTSE Board Report: Putting UK progress into a global perspective. [Section 5 of the report (p.34-48) was led by Doldor and focused drivers of change during the Davies Review and future action needed after the review]

[5.2] [Reports]

A) Sealy, R., Doldor, E., & Vinnicombe, S. (2016). The Female FTSE Board Report: Taking Stock of Where we are. [Section 5 of the report (p.33-59) focused on targets and was led by Doldor.]

B) Vinnicombe, S., Doldor, E., Battista, V. & Tessaro, M. (2020). The Female FTSE Board Report: Taking Targets Seriously [Section 4 of the report (p.43-59) focused on targets and was led by Doldor, as acknowledged on p. 50.]

[5.3] [Report] Vinnicombe, S., Doldor, E., & Sealy, R., (2018). The Female FTSE Board Report: Busy going nowhere with the executive pipeline [Section 5 of the report (p.29-41) was led by Doldor and focused on the career trajectories of senior executives on executive committees, below board level.]

[5.4] [Testimonial] Deputy Director of the Government Equalities Office [Corroborator 1]

[5.5] [Report] Doldor's Female FTSE report quoted in the 2016 Hampton-Alexander Review into Women Leaders, and advisory input from Doldor acknowledged on p. 37 of this key policy-making document.

https://30percentclub.org/assets/uploads/UK/Third_Party_Reports/Hampton_Alexander_Review_Paper_Nov_2016.pdf

[5.6] [Report] Doldor's Female FTSE Reports quoted as main source of data on the front page of the 2015 closing Davies Review Report (which set the initial WoB voluntary gender targets):
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482059/BIS-15-585-women-on-boards-davies-review-5-year-summary-october-2015.pdf

[5.7] [Toolkit] 'Women's Progression in the Workplace: actions for employers' toolkit produced by the Government Equalities Office Work and Gender Equality Network (WAGE), of which Doldor is academic member. Toolkit available on the Government's website, informed by academic advisory input based on Doldor's research:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/womens-progression-in-the-workplace-actions-for-employers>

[5.8] [Media] Illustrative media mentions of Doldor's research on women on boards and in the executive pipeline:

CNN - <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/27/business/getting-women-on-board-study-ftse/index.html>

HR Magazine - <http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/companies-urged-to-look-at-female-executive-pipeline-as-women-on-boards-progress-slows-1>

Ethnic diversity in senior leadership

[5.9] [Testimonial] Diversity & Inclusion Senior Manager at EY, evidencing the impact of the research on the firm's approach to improving diversity in leadership [Corroborator 2]

Usage of the research by key policy-makers in the field:

[5.10] [Review] Atewologun and Doldor's 'Charting the course' EY case study featured in 2017 Parker national review on Ethnic Diversity on UK Boards (p. 61), which made the first recommendations for voluntary ethnic minority targets for FTSE 350 listed boards:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ethnic-diversity-of-uk-boards-the-parker-review>