

## **Reflection on Building a library for a local secondary school in Vietnam (12<sup>th</sup> June – 29<sup>th</sup> July 2016)**

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After this 49 days in Vietnam, I found out that this program is unforgettable and meaningful and I have learnt a lot not only from the views of civil engineer but also from the perspectives of social science students. First, being as a civil engineer, I really learnt a lot throughout the construction process of the library, from checking the designs to setting foundation, walls, columns, etc. Although the foundation part had already been done by the workers due to the time restraint, we asked the workers on the details in the foundation part, for example the soil analysis whether the soil has enough bearing capacity, and what foundation method should be used.

Before the construction, the very basic thing that we learnt was safety that it is advised to wear safety tools, such as safety boots and gloves as there are lots of nails or other sharp materials in the construction site. I remembered we were also advised not to kick, not to jump and not to run in all the construction sites in order to prevent us from getting hurt. During the construction, we learnt basic building techniques from workers including cementing the bricks for walls, digging and filling the soil and fixing the steel bars. In this way, we had hand-on experiences on sites, it really helps us in our civil career. Furthermore, we also learnt how to management the project. For all the civil engineer students, we are arranged to write site diaries every day. For the site diaries, we wrote the progress of library construction and the thing that we and the workers did and constructed on that day. By referring to the site diaries, we could understand the progress of the library construction that if the progress is far behind schedule, we have to inform the principals and the workers.

Apart from library construction, we also had to participate in the social science relating affairs, comprising of the need analysis, data collection, ADP, etc. Taking part in these activities, I could get touch to the local villagers. We could understood their culture, their daily living, their needs and their opinions. I am really appreciated that most of the children were very friendly and they will play with us even though we are in different races, different language and different cultures. In the ground breaking and ending ceremony, they also perform traditional dances and music to us which help us understand more local Vietnam cultures. By doing different research and collecting data, we can understand the main needs and main concerns of the villagers which can help me improve the project or the operation. Take reading habit research as example, we could find out most of students had only a low variety of reading materials. As a result, we can suggest to the school about the operation of the new library and the reading materials so to improve the interest and reading habit.

Last but not least, the interpreters accompanying us are very helpful and friendly to us. In the very beginning, I was afraid that we may not get close due to the difference in culture. But, the result turned out that we become good friends after all. They did a lot in translating all the materials from Vietnamese to English, and they also bought us to play in Vietnam to experience the local culture and live. I am sure that we could not finish all the duties and project without them.