

Reflection on Project Mingde Summer Camp 2017 (11th – 15th June, 2017)

Ho Constance Wun Kiu

3035110816

BA&BEd(LangEd)-English, Year 4

The Project Mingde Volunteering Teaching Summer Camp is a very rewarding trip. Being an education student, teaching in a classroom is not a fresh experience for me, and throughout my university life I have tried different volunteering teaching. However, this camp is distinctly different from my previous volunteering teaching trips. Not only does this trip involve students from various faculties, but also is it a part of the construction projects of Project Mingde. I am tremendously honoured to witness the constructions of Project Mingde during this trip, as well as being able to teach students in the rural area of Guangxi. I am also thrilled to have a chance to know what the Faculty of Engineering has been doing in the communities in China.

The first thing I noticed when we entered Daping Primary School was the smile of the students there. Despite the shortage of resources and hygienic facilities, they were very eager to welcome us. They were very interested in our lessons too and the school staff treated us well. We have felt the warmth from the school and people in that village.

According to the teachers in Daping, one thing about English Language Teaching (ELT) in the area is that primary schools only start ELT in P5. This contradicts with my knowledge about ELT in mainland China as from my experience in the Ningbo experiential project by my faculty, normally schools in mainland start ELT in P1. The teachers in Daping further explained that their school does not have P5, meaning that students in Daping Primary School never get a chance to learn the English language. The situation is caused by the lack of eligible teachers in the area, and this lack is caused by the shortage of suitable facilities – namely comfortable living spaces, hygienic environment and convenient transport. “Life here is too hard,” said one teacher I met in Daping. “No female teachers would want to come. Good teachers would not be attracted to come either – we have nothing here.”

ELT is what I focus on in this trip as this is my major, thus I am naturally concerned about it. I am aware of the fact that students here may not need English language that desperately and practically in their village lives. Nonetheless, if other schools in the urbanised areas of China provide ELT, then students in Daping have a right to receive English language education as well. And it startles me that they do not have a chance to learn what other students in China can learn, not because of their inability, but because of the environment here. This makes me think that if the environment in Daping can be improved, it can first attract more equipped and willing teachers to come. Ultimately, Daping students will have a chance to get the equal education as all the other Chinese students do.

If this volunteering teaching camp will be conducted again and carried on in future, I suggest focusing on the facilities first, to provide a better and more hygienic environment to attract more teaching professionals. If possible, I hope the Faculty of Engineering can cooperate with the Faculty of Education in long term, to better support the pedagogical development of the local teachers. Our faculty has a lot of experiential learning projects and there are a lot of passionate student-teachers who have many good teaching ideas. I believe this may ignite knowledge exchange with the teachers in Daping as well. This cooperation will be beneficial that teachers may have better facilities developed by the engineering people, while more training and support from the education people. In this way, we can support Daping School both physically and pedagogically.