

Reflection on Building a library for a local secondary school in Vietnam (12th June – 29th July 2016)

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This trip is definitely one of the most memorable experiences that I have gained since my expectations for this trip have been fulfilled and even more than that.

As a Civil Engineering student, this programme offers me an opportunity to work on construction site and applies knowledge that I have learnt into real-life engineering problems. We may not often have the chance to pick up the shovel or hammer to construct small part of the building in the internship in Hong Kong, but in this programme in Vietnam, we learnt the proper way to use a shovel, how the brick walls are built, how the stirrups are bent or how concrete is casted. Besides, we also get a glimpse of what the inner part of a building looks like. Normally we cannot see the steel bar inside the concrete or the bricks on a brick wall before plastering but this time, we can try the steel fixing, lay the brickworks or many other skills.

Apart from the practical knowledge gained, I also realised the importance of safety and management on site. It is no doubt that the construction safety in Vietnam is far below the standard in well-developed countries and accidents will occur if we do not stay alert and do full protection. It is quite unforgettable that one of the students stepped on a nail and it reminded me that we should always wear safety shoes on site to prevent us from foot injury.

On the other hand, a good management is needed to maintain the efficiency and keep the progress moving forward so that the project can be finished on time. To ensure the works get done on time, we have to clearly understand the tasks we are assigned to and we should ask whether we have questions or problems. For example, we often ask what we exactly have to do when we arrive the site. If we do not have enough tools, we would ask the workers for help and offer us more tools. If we found too many people are doing the same task, we have to reallocate the labour such that the work can be done in the most efficient way.

Other than the experience related to Civil Engineering, I also realize the importance of reading and how we take all the good facilities in Hong Kong for granted. Most of the students in the village we visited are from underprivileged family and they cannot afford to buy books to read. And yet, the teachers mentioned that they will exchange books with each other and on the day the library is opened, many students rushed into the library and read the books immediately. I can see that they treasure the new library very much and they have the enthusiasm to learn more. I hope that this new library can give them what they need and become a key to widen their horizon. I am also glad that I learn and experience many things in the trip!