

Tak PO Lam

I first joined a programme from Project Mingde in the Semester 1 of my second year. The programme was to go to remote area in China and try to help with their poor education condition. After that trip, I found it very meaningful and inspirational. It is also a trigger to me for joining this trip. Throughout this two-month journey, I have learnt a lot. The things I learnt from the trip is not only focusing on civil engineering aspect, but also on other academic aspect, such as social science. The cooperation between social science students benefit a lot, as we have a chance to know people who look at matters from a different angle. The role of us on site is to be as assistant resident engineer. We are responsible to facilitate the communication between contractor, workers and also other parties. It was the first time for me to work in a site and taking up an official responsibility. The long period of working in site gave me chances to understand and familiarize different process in a construction project. It also gives me a picture of what an engineer should be doing at work. Before going to this trip, I didn't know much about construction. But through trainings, and different events in the trip, I have the chances to know more and try different new things. For example, it is the first time for me to lay bricks and work like a bricklayer, the first time to mix mortar and first time to have meetings between different parties. The hand-on experience is precious because most of the time if you really want to understand or learn something new, the best way is to get your hands dirty. It also gives us a taste of how demanding the job may be. What we only see is how easily those workers can get their work done, but what we can't see is the effort they put into mastering and learning the skills. The work may not be as easy as it seems. The weekly regular meetings also provided us a chance to have a direct dialogue with consultant, client and contractors. We learnt how to raise questions regarding the construction, giving suggestions and cope with different problems. Besides knowledge on civil engineering, we also cooperate with social science students to carry out the reading habit survey, most significant change stories and etc. It is very challenging for me as I do not have any background and knowledge related to social science. It is very hard for me to pick up at first but it is very lucky that my groupmates are generous to share and teach me lot of things which will not be taught in the curriculum of my study. But with all that being said, I think the first-person experience to live in Vietnam society, to know more about their social context and have a chance to build up relationship with

Vietnamese that may last forever is the ultimate gain for me.

This Vietnam Library project gives me lots of food for thought and equip me to be a better engineer. After the trip, I understand that although we view objects on a more engineering aspect, we should not limit ourselves by those calculations. We have to think further and look wider. If a building cannot serve its ultimate purpose, then building it is just a waste of resources. We should understand that the scope of civil engineering is wider than we may think and buildings or construction project is more than an engineering product. This trip inspirits me a lot and there are lots of gains throughout the trip.

Last but not least, I would like to thank you every person that is involved in this Project..

Without other's help, we could not learn and experience so much in this intern in Vietnam.

It will definitely be a life-long memory.