

Reflection on Third Study Trip to Wangdong Bridge

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This was the first time I joined Project Mingde, and it was refreshing and rewarding.

While the first day was all about transportation, we did not miss the opportunity to learn new things. As we lingered in the West Kowloon station before the train started, we had discussed the structure of the station and how it was built. When we were on the train, professors had also shared their experience as an engineer and some funny moments. They had also shared some insights about some heated engineering topics in Hong Kong, such as settlement in buildings and leakage of water in train stations. Through their sharing, I had gained a lot of practical knowledge which was never taught in lectures.

The real task started on the second day, when we met Secretary Liu and the construction team. We went to the target site and discussed the proposed bridge design as well as the construction method.

To be honest, I was a bit surprised that the people there did not rely on any calculations or physical models, and instead rely solely on their past/ practical experience to build a bridge. There was not even a certified engineer; they just build according to their normal practice. Nonetheless, I have to give my respect to them because their methods did work, even though safety was not always guaranteed.

We cannot criticize their methodology since their practice is the accumulative knowledge of their ancestors, so does our engineering theory. Sometimes, their design and construction method may be even simpler, cheaper and consume less resources. The only problem is that whole process is not as safe as that in Hong Kong.

Perhaps this is why they need our help: not just the funding, but also the engineering theory to back up their overly 'practical' design.

In retrospect, this trip had really broadened my horizons about the engineering practice in other places, as well as learning some technical knowledge about building a suspension bridge. I will definitely join future trips on Project Mingde because they always give me a meaningful experience.