

My Experiences of Learning at NYMU

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Introduction

I am a first year Master student enrolled in the International Health Program at National Yang-Ming University (NYMU) in Taiwan, Taipei city. I enrolled in this university in September 2016. Since my arrival, which is about six months ago, I have pleasant experiences about staying in Taiwan and studying at National Yang-Ming University.

In this essay, I will share my experiences about studying at National Yang-Ming University as well as living in Taiwan. I will first give a brief introduction of myself and discuss the reason for coming to Taiwan. I will then share my experiences on the following issues: life at NYMU, academic experience at NYMU, experience in health issues, other experiences about Taiwan and lastly will be the conclusion.

My background

My country of origin is Swaziland. Swaziland is a small landlocked but beautiful country with a population of around one million people, located in the Southern part of Africa, bordered by South Africa and Mozambique.



I am a registered nurse by profession. Before I enrolled with NYMU, I was working for the Government of Swaziland under the Ministry of Health in the National Tuberculosis Control Program as a Regional Tuberculosis (TB) Coordinator, coordinating all TB activities in one of the regions in Swaziland. The National TB Control Program is a public health program, which deals with prevention, detection, diagnosis, treatment, follow up and care of tuberculosis. It also deals with epidemiological research on TB control.

As I was doing my routine job, I discovered that I was not competent enough in the research area as such there was a need to bridge that gap, hence my coming to study in Taiwan.

Reason for coming to Taiwan

The main reason for me to come to Taiwan was to upgrade myself professionally in the field of Public health, which also entails obtaining knowledge and skills in the field of research. Out of many countries that offers Public health, one can have



• A picture I took when I first came at the university in September 2016

question as to why did I choose to study in Taiwan and at NYMU? The response is simple: Taiwan has a strong bond with Swaziland and it is one of the countries that are assisting Swaziland to meet the Strategic Development Goals (SDGs). Taiwan supports my country in a number of developmental interventions including professional development by providing scholarships to the Swazi people; hence I was awarded scholarship by the Taiwan ICDF to study in Taiwan. Furthermore, NYMU is one of the universities that offer the best public health Program (International Health) in Taiwan. It does not only offer the best program but also offers it in an international language, English, which makes it easier for the international students to learn. In addition, NYMU is known to have a good reputation; also the beauty and the location of the university in Taipei city was an added advantage for me to choose it.

Life at NYMU

When I first arrived at the university, I received a warm welcome from my buddy who oriented and assisted me in settling in. As if that was not enough, there was also a group of students who organized a welcome party for all new international students and we really felt at home.

In the six months that I have been at the university, I have enjoyed attending the social gatherings that the school organizes such as the port luck party where we met as international students,

socialized and shared different traditional dishes from our home countries.

I have also enjoyed the Christmas

events that had been

organized specifically for international students to share gifts.

There is however one event that the school organized for all the students that impressed me the most, the New Year



• New Year dinner for international students (photo by Wendy Peng)

• The beautiful campus of NYMU (photo by Wendy Peng)





● A lecture taking place in one of the classrooms at IHP

dinner. Every student that had attended the dinner was given a gift that was in the form of material and cash. That would always be a memorable event for me and I really appreciated the school and the International office for organizing such an event. Besides all these nice social gatherings, NYMU makes you as an international student feel wanted and important. I say this because there was one time where the school president invited us for dinner and allowed each one of us to voice out our concerns and to my surprise he was listening attentively to everyone's concern and would give solutions as necessary to some of the concerns.

Academic experience at NYMU

National Yang-Ming University offers a variety of good courses in the IHP program. Most of the courses are interlinked to produce a good researcher. There are courses on: Epidemiology, Bio-statistics, Seminar, Health Policy, International Health, Social and behavioral sciences, Environmental health



● The school library

and Infection and Immunity.

My academic interest is mainly on infection and immunity and also on health policy more so because my country is highly burdened with infectious diseases (TB and HIV). Since my enrollment with the university, I have found learning more interesting because of the education system and style provided by the Professors, it gives you an opportunity to obtain new information and skills everyday. The international mix of students also creates a favorable environment to obtain broad knowledge and understanding of the different cultures and their application to public health. Although learning at Yang-Ming University might sound interesting, there are however courses that are a little bit challenging that require a student to put more effort in them. However, it is all about focusing and commitment that makes one achieve the best grade.

Experiences in health issues

Coming to health issues, I was fortunate to be one of the students who attended an intensive course organized by NYMU during the winter break in January 2017 whereby an orientation on Taiwan public health system was given. During this course, there was also an opportunity to visit some of the Ministry of Health departments. From



● Inside Chinese Medicine Department

the site visit, I was greatly taken by the organization and structure of the Ministry of Health; from the information that was provided at the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), the monitoring and evaluation system of infectious diseases seemed to be well organized and highly effective.

This is one of the departments that I envy my country to have. CDC was not the only department that was well structured and organized; there were other departments such as the health promotion unit, Pharmaceutical and cosmetic unit, the long-term elderly care unit to mention a few.

We also got a chance to visit the National Health Insurance department where a comprehensive presentation was given about the Taiwan health insurance system. From the information that was given, there was no doubt that this insurance is highly effective and is one of the best in world. During the sites visits it was also interesting to learn that traditional medicine in Taiwan has standards i.e. developed in the laboratory like western medicine, which is rarely happening in many African countries where there are a lot of traditional Doctors.

Other experiences in Taiwan

Despite the fact that I came to Taiwan to study, life is not all about studying but also about refreshing in between the studies, exploring and admiring the beauty of the small Island of Taiwan. The first thing that impressed me the most when I first moved around Taipei is the main transportation system mainly known as the MRT.

Although I had some challenges in grasping its operations at first, as this kind of transportation system is not available in my country, my buddy oriented me well and now I can go wherever I want to go without a problem.

Another thing that I would say amazed me is the low crime rate in Taiwan, which I still need to learn on how Taiwan achieves this best behavior, which most countries are battling

to achieve. I have also experienced the warmth and friendliness of the Taiwanese people as I was moving around, though at times there would be the language barrier but they would try by all means to

assist you when you need help.

During the winter break, I also had an opportunity to visit the southern part of Taiwan with some of the international students. The beauty of nature, the fresh air, beautiful beaches and also the wonderful weather in that area brought about a refreshing and relaxed atmosphere.

Conclusion

I am grateful for the Taiwan ICDF Scholarship and National Yang-Ming University for providing me with this opportunity to further my studies in International Public Health. Since my enrollment with National Yang-Ming University, I had wonderful experiences and hoping to still experiencing more. I have also gained and acquired knowledge and skills that will enhance my work in the public health field as I continue with my profession. 



● Shevane Nisbett, Teluleko Maseko and myself (Lindiwe Dlamini) in one of the sites at Kaohsiung

● The Taipei MRT (photo by Wendy Peng)

