

NYMU: the Ladder to Destiny!

by Ashaolu Opeolu Joseph



● Attending the 2016 TICA CUP (right)

When I was just a little child growing up in Nigeria, I was used to seeing many technological products, particularly electronics such as radio, television etc., all made in Taiwan. And always almost unconsciously and involuntarily, I said to myself, “one day I will be in this country”. As time passes by while growing up, I almost forgot anything and everything about visiting Taiwan. I went to high school and attended the university in my country for my first and second degree, B.Sc. and M.Sc. respectively,

● The International Health Programme of NYMU
(photo by Wendy Peng)

In an attempt to further my education for a PhD degree, I started searching for countries and schools where I could do my study because I have no intention of doing it in my country. As I continue to search, I stumbled on the Asian continent and as destiny would have it, I applied to the International Health Programme (IHP) of National Yang-Ming University and I was chosen after the second attempt.

My First Lesson

It was the dawn of 3rd September 2016, I and my friends (also international students meeting for the first time) went out to take a dinner because we were hungry.

Since our school is in Taipei city, we in no time located a food canteen and we hurriedly waded in to satisfy our curiosity and answer the call to our stomach outcry. Little did I know that I was in for a serious business and a new “eating adventure”. We took our seat and one of the servers in the cafeteria came to us with the food menu. We skimmed and looked into the food menu with such



immediate alacrity, first, being the first time and seeing the kind of foods I have probably never met in my life!

So I placed my order and patiently waited for the arrival of the food. In less than about

five minutes the

food was brought

and of

course we

expected

the cutlery.

I was amazed,

dazed and

flabbergasted

when two sticks

were brought to me, not because I have not seen them

before, of course at least I have seen them in Chinese,

Japanese and Korean movies, but this time, it looks like I

am in the movies and now to be watched by somebody

else!

Without any prior practical experience, I became nervous

with the new exercise. To make the matter worse, we

asked if we could get fork and the waiters responded a

“No” without a blink of an eye. This looks like a setup

and I was forced to make use of what I have been given.

I tried to look at my other friends and other people in the

canteen to do a quick and fast learning of the procedure.

Well, I did try to copy and imitate their skills in handling

the chopsticks but it really was not an easy task for me. I

managed, though it took a longer time and much labour, to

finish eating my food. Immediately we left the venue, I felt

a sigh of relief but I made up my mind never to allow the

experience to reoccur.

Immediately I got back to my dormitory, I placed a facebook

call to my Chinese buddy (that was assigned to assist me)

and narrated my ordeal at the restaurant, he couldn't help

but laugh at me. Anyway we made an arrangement to

meet and to learn how to use the chopsticks. When we

met eventually on the said day, of course

I bought noodles already and he came with the

chopsticks.

Among every other things, he systematically taught me

how to use the chopsticks following the procedure below

step wisely: picking up the first chopstick and placing it in-

between my middle finger and the base of my thumb,

gripping the second chopstick with my index finger and

thumb, practicing opening and closing the chopsticks and to

start picking up the food particles. (Xie-xie to my buddy)

Academic

Experiences

In no time we

took on the

registration

procedures

and the classes

were set

to begin.

During

the IHP

departmental orientation, we met

the faculty members and had a rapour for some couple

of minutes. But because we had some brief introductions

with the faculty members we didn't really get to know

them well. However, we were all given a departmental

handbook which invariably contains a fuller information

about the academic background of the faculty members.

I went through it after the get-together and discovered a

mind blowing information about my potential teachers.

Even though it is an Asian University in an Asian country,

my initial thought was that the lecturers would be

completely Asian academic breeds but I soon discovered

that it isn't really so. I got to understand that most of the

faculty members (over 80%), I stand to be corrected, had

either a part or total of their academic training in the best

schools in the United states, United Kingdom or other



• Attending "2017 New Year dinner" for international students (photo by Wendy Peng)



• Visiting Chimei Museum in Tainan (right 1)

European countries!

First, as this may sound not important to some academic folks, it surely is very important to me because it appears I am undertaking my study in these foremost nations of the world, making me an extended student of these

great institutions. Furthermore, I stand to be a better academic product because we are privileged to be a breed of combined academic experiences. While a professor of a particular course might be trained in the UK and another in the US, they both impacted their respective experiences from different countries and different background into one single 'me'. That, to me is a great treasure which I cherished as someone developing career in the academics. This I called the in-class experience.

Outside the Classroom Experiences

It was really a great and exciting moment for me to participate in the Taiwan health system intensive course this year (one of the optional courses in IHP). It is a course that permits the students who cares to visit and learn about the health system of Taiwan and how it works. Truly and evidently speaking, I have been exposed to some things that really baffle me and challenged my curiosity.

From our visits to different health parastatals which includes the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Health Promotion Administration, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Centers for Disease control (CDC), National Research Institute of Chinese Medicine, National Health Insurance Administration, Taipei City Hospital and New Taipei City

Public Health Department, I have gathered so many information, lessons, ideas and illuminations that has refocused and shifted my thinking positively.

For instance, since it has been popularly asserted that "health is wealth" which is undoubtedly true, the department of Health Promotion Administration has shown me various ways of creating a healthy population starting from school kids, even including very busy working middle-aged population while not forgetting the elderly. A system that promotes an all-inclusive health in the population such as this, is worthy to be emulated.

Also, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are so fantastic in their well coordinated manner in order to create a synergistic approach to safety in consumables which include foods, drugs, cosmetics and medical devices. It is an understatement to say that they are one of the most efficient quality control and safety organization I have ever seen. Their ability to prospectively detect the smartness of the merchants in the drug world and as such stay ahead of their smartness and curb their deadly activities deserves a standing ovation. This is a very great lesson for me, that you don't always think in a retrospective manner but you can always stay at least, a step ahead of your competitors. Furthermore, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) deserves a feather on their cap as they are very organized and efficient in their alertness and response to infectious disease outbreak. The information and communication gadgets observed in their domain are second to none.



● Participating in the Taiwan health system intensive course



● Participating in the Taiwan health system intensive course

The umbrella-type of surveillance system that covers both the in-house and travel borders observations in a globalized world deserves a commendation. Their emergency response arm and local representatives are all good initiatives to always prevent disease outbreak as it is often said that “prevention is better than cure”.

We also learn a great deal from the institute of Chinese traditional medicine. It is of great importance to note that it is detrimental to dismiss, destroy or absolutely relegate to the background your cultural heritage. This is one of the important lessons learnt at the Chinese traditional medicine hub. It was exclusively and categorically stated, which of course we do know that not all diseases can be cured by western medicine. More so, the uses of acupuncture in the treatment of certain medical issues are interesting. I hope to undergo the training someday!

The long-term care plan which was discussed both at the Taipei City Hospital and the New Taipei City Public Health Department is a good initiative for adequate care of the elderly population. The holistic approach for such care which include end of life care, day care and Home based care are all excellent strategy to keep the elderly warm, friendly and healthy even at the point of death! More so,

the medical equipment seen at the Taipei City Hospital shows a serious commitment of the government to the absolute wellbeing of its citizens. I wish every other government particularly in other developing countries could learn from these so as to improve the quality of care in their respective countries.

Finally, I want to salute the courage of the National Health Insurance scheme for the job well done. Managing over 23 million people’s health with such efficiency, both in terms of economic view and health care delivery is not just a task, it is an enormous assignment, but they have proven to be well up and able to the task. I hope to transmit this to my country someday.

I want to say that I have learned a lot from the Taiwan health system and I can recommend this system for any reasonable country with well-meaning intention for her citizens particularly in the area of health and health care delivery. I also want to salute the Taiwanese government for her seriousness and concern towards her citizens and giving someone like me an opportunity to learn from her health system.

Just want to say Xie-xie to ICDF, NYMU and the Taiwanese government! ■■■

● Visiting the Ministry of Health and Welfare

