

## Reflection Journal

Exchange Programme: Outbound trip to Sasebo NIT- 20 to 26 June 2016

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We arrived at Fukuoka Airport on Monday (20/06/16) where we first met the director of NIT Sasebo College, Professor Fukuda. He warmly welcomed us and provided us the transport to Sasebo. It took us about an hour and a half to reach. Once we reached the hotel and pay for our accommodation, we were left to walk around the area to familiarise ourselves with the vicinity. Prof Fukuda brought us to the nearest shopping mall to have our lunch and left us alone to explore. While walking around, the mall was generally quiet and the walkway there were really clean as well. The people we encountered were also friendly towards us. As we had difficulty communicating in Japanese, they tried really hard to understand us, and in return tried to explain to us in English.

The very next day, on Tuesday, we went to visit the school, NIT Sasebo College. We met the president of the school, and from him, we learn that within Japan, different areas have different practices. Some areas are still following the traditional Japanese culture whereas there are areas that are in the new culture. As the students were having lessons, the director was the one who brought us around the school to explore. One of the places we visited was their library, where a few of the students were studying. Their library was not big but there was plenty of books in both English and Japanese. It was really quiet and clean. I believe that it was a very conducive environment for them.

We also went around their dormitory which was at the other side of the campus. Since it was probably during school hours, the dormitories were extremely quiet with no one else spotted. Afterwards, we went to their canteen to have lunch. Their canteen was divided into 2, where all the ladies were in another smaller room and at the smaller division while all the males were at the larger area. We were curious so we asked the director why it was so. The director simply replied with "The girls wanted it". This intrigued me as to why there was a segregation. What did the boys do that the girls wanted them separated? I was wondering if this were to happen in SP, what would have happened to the lone gender in the class? For example, an engineering class with only a girl. Does that mean that girl would have to eat alone for the whole of her years in school? That would have been so lonely for the girl! I felt relieved knowing this would never happen in SP.

After lunch at their canteen, we were able to meet and interact with the students for the first time. It was a little nerve-wrecking when we entered the room and there was over 30 students welcoming us. We introduced ourselves with basic Japanese and were divided into pairs to view the posters the students prepared to present to us. Through the posters and presentation, I was able to learn more about local delights as well as a little of Japan's culture. For example, Sasebo's local delight was Sasebo Hamburger. The students were strongly recommending it, as well as their lemon steak. We managed to try the Sasebo Hamburger when we went to the aquarium. It was indeed up to expectation and really delicious. I also learnt about the sports day in Japan. They had this pole fight game that all the boys in class take part in. It is the highlight of the sports event, where boys of opponent team try to topple the pole over. It was really interesting as Singapore do not have such competitive games. It was probably too dangerous as well.

During tea break, we were able to have a chat with the students there. Even though there was a slight language barrier between us, we were able to have a great and fun chat. Apparently, they have only about 30 percent of the students who will proceed to university while the rest will join the workforce. We also shared with them about our school's solar car and they were really impressed when they learned about it. The exchange between us were informative and we were able to learn more about each other's school.

During the trip, we also went to Huis Ten Bosch, a recreation of a Dutch town theme park. It was also my very first time taking their train. As usual, it was really clean and generally quiet as well. Furthermore, it was all cushioned seats, making it an incredibly comfortable ride to Hui Ten Bosch from Sasebo. Their trains arrive and leave right on the dot, making it a lot easier to plan out the timing to go catch a train. However, the down side was probably the long duration in between each train's arrival. This is very different from Singapore's train system, where frequency is highly demanded, as Singaporeans generally want shorter waiting time.

In Japan, even the bus rides organised by the school were all on time. Japanese time consciousness is really commendable as they were probably never late. This made me reflect on myself who have been late on multiple events. How is it that the Japanese were always able to be right on time and with the train timings being so far apart, they are still able to plan out their time and reach their destinations on time. In Singapore, with such high frequencies of train, we may have lost our urgency as we might have thought that the next train would probably arrive in a few minutes which will not make any big differences to the time of our arrival.

In their fast food restaurants, their way of disposal is also different from us. The bin was separated to plastic, general waste and leftover ice cubes and drinks. We have to return our own trays and dispose it accordingly as well.

On Thursday, we went Nagasaki with the lecturers of NIT Sasebo College to visit the Atomic Bomb Hypocenter, Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum and the Peace Park. During the whole tour, we were able to understand the pain and the difficulties the victims of the bomb went through as we looked through the photos displayed. Some were really grotesque, such as the melted hand that was caused by the bomb. There was also a photo of a little boy who was totally burnt beyond recognition. Mother Teresa who visited the museum had once commented on the photo, condemning on the usage of the atomic bomb. The disaster of the atomic bomb dropped should not be forgotten and everyone should remember how much of a disaster it will cause. People that was near the hypocentre developed diseases, or was deformed. This history should never be repeated. The Japanese had also paid tribute to the thousands of Koreans that was brought in through force. It really touched me to see that Japanese acknowledges their mistake and is willing to ask for forgiveness. Afterwards, we went to Mitsubishi museum where we see the evolvement of Mitsubishi and how it grew. We were able to see and touch the old equipment that were used back then to build ships. Following that, as the weather was good, the lecturers brought us to the observatory tower to witness the beautiful landscape of Sasebo. It was a fruitful day.

During the second day of visit to the school, we were able to hear the presentation of the advanced students' research project. Personally, I struggled a little to understand as there was a mixture of chemical, electrical and mechanical researches. During presentations that was based on chemical and electrical engineering, it was really hard for me to catch on as I have little to no knowledge on it, but the students were really kind and patient as they tried to help me understand. After the

presentations, we were divided into EEE and MAE as we go around visiting their facilities. They showed us their products from the project and kindly presented to us about their products as well. At the end, they provided us with a small activity where we assemble the keychain. It was really fun as it was hands on and we were able to keep the keychains as well. As we visited their labs, there was 1 lab that was really messy. There was boxes and their equipment on the table was everywhere. The lecturer there told us not to step any further as it is dangerous for us. I was really surprised when I witnessed the scene as if this would never be allowed in SP since it will be hazardous.

This whole trip has enlightened me in terms of Japanese culture and history as well as the studying environment. It was a pleasant trip as the locals were really welcoming and friendly towards us. The school had also taken care of us meticulously and planned the day for us with a lot of effort. In return, I hope that we will be able to do the same to them as well, welcoming them warmly and planned a fun day for them in Singapore when they come to visit.