

EXPERIENCE IN TAIWAN

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1. Introduction

Visiting different places and countries is my ultimate goal, but having the opportunity to study abroad and stayed for a coupled of months is much more than an ultimate goal; it is a dream come true for me. After my educational trip to Taiwan in 2019, I can say that I feel easily attached to the place. Since then, I have dreamed that, if given the chance, I would pursue my education in this country. But this dream was not easy. I needed to spend a lot of money and courage to be away from my home in order to achieved my dream.



In God's perfect timing, Before I finish my bachelor's degree, I received some good news saying that I am one of the lucky students who's chosen to go and pursue an education at Nanhua University under the Taiwan Experience Education Program (TEEP) with the help of Professor Hong Yao-Ming. Without any doubt, I talked to my family about the news and my decision, which is that I really want to grab this one-time, big-time opportunity that a student can receive. Luckily, I have a supportive and very understanding family that gives their best to provide all I need to go to Taiwan. Going to a different country that is way different from where I was born is a challenge for me. There's a time when I miss my family. I miss everything I am always doing in my country. But these challenges and problems did not give me any hesitation to continue achieving my goal and gave me motivation to accept the offer of becoming a TEEP student.

2. Course Subject

During our six-month stay at Nanhua University, we learned a lot, not only in the actual activities on the farm but also in the classroom discussions. A total of six subject courses have been tackled during our stay at Nanhua University: Technologies for Sustainable Agriculture, Organic Agriculture I, Dendrobium Cultivation, Apiculture, Organic Agriculture II, and Phalaenopsis Cultivation. Professors of these subjects impart their knowledge to us so that we

can learn and be enlightened about each subject course that we may use in the near future and also in our daily lives.

2.1 Technologies for Sustainable Agriculture

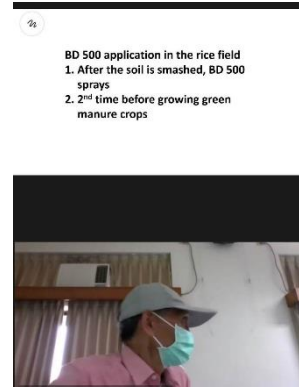
In this class, Professor Chen Shih-Shiung imparts his knowledge to us about technologies for sustainable agriculture. I learned about artificial intelligence and its contribution to sustainable agriculture. Artificial intelligence plays an important role in today's generation because it provides more precise information when it comes to analyzing data. By using these innovations, we can improve production and produce the best results. Studying about artificial intelligence helps us gain knowledge about different technologies and modern innovations for sustainable agriculture.



(Photos taken during our class on technologies for sustainable agriculture and one of our classmates, Casper Lin, presenting his report.)

2.2 Organic Agriculture I

Professor Chen Yi-Sung was my instructor in this subject. He taught us about organic agriculture. He explained to us how organic agriculture helps sustain the production of agricultural products. The professor taught us about biodynamic compost, commonly known as BD compost. This compost has nine preparations from BD 500 to BD 508, and each preparation contains different elements. Another topic the professor introduced to us is "microgreens." This is about growing crops that have more nutrients and only take 7–14 days to harvest; there is no need to wait for mature plants. I learned a lot in this subject, for some of the topics are very interesting and new to me, and the professor explained thoroughly every topic that he has.



(Photos taken during our classroom discussion about Microgreens and biodynamic compost.)

2.3 Dendrobium Cultivation

Studying about flowers, specifically orchids, is new to me, but during our class in Dendrobium cultivation, I learned a lot. Professor Simon Lai is the one who is teaching us this subject. He taught us the proper management of dendrobium. I can say that the professor really imparts a lot of knowledge about this topic, for he himself is cultivating dendrobium. If you have knowledge on how to manage Dendrobium, then you can have good-quality orchids to sell to gain more profit.



(Professor discussing about Dendrobium.)



(Watering the Dendrobium.)

2.4 Apiculture

In this subject, our professor discussed bees with us. Professor Chen Shih-Shiung is our instructor in this subject; he taught us the proper management of bees. I can say that I really enjoy attending this class because it is new to me and I find it interesting to take care of bees. The management of bees is not easy, but if you have the patience and motivation to do it, you can have a good harvest of honey that you can see and profit from.



(Professor showing the bees.)



(making bee frames.)

2.4.1 Honey Harvesting

For me, honey harvesting is the most exciting part of managing bees. I am very lucky to have experienced the harvesting of honey. When harvesting honey, you should wear a protective suit because if not, I can surely say that you might get stung by bees because in order to collect the honey, you will have to get the frame where bees are storing honey. In this case, bees will be destroyed, and they will be more active. If you have a good harvest of honey, you can also make a good profit when you sell it.



(Photos taken during harvesting of honey.)

2.5 Organic Agriculture II

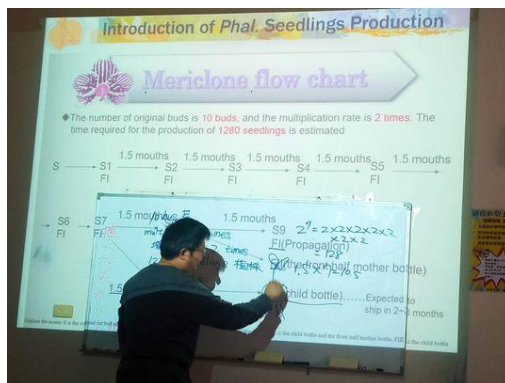
This subject is a continuation of Organic Agriculture I in that we have the same professor, which is Professor Chen Yi-Sung. During this class, he taught about Cow Pat Pit, also known as CPP, KKF and organic rice cultivation. He taught how to manage rice diseases without using commercial inputs. He also introduced different plants that we can grow as cover crops. In this subject, I learned a lot because the professor discussed topics very thoroughly.



(Professor is discussing about KKF and letting us mixed the KKF)

2.6 Phalaenopsis Cultivation

Professor Simon Lai is our teacher in this subject, and he taught us how to manage Phalaenopsis. The same in Dendrobium cultivation. at first, I found it difficult, but as the class continued, I slowly understood how to manage phalaenopsis. He taught us different dilutions of fertilizer. Because the professor owns an orchid company, he really taught us in detail and let us experience repotting and applying fertilizer to the plant.



(During classroom discussion.)

3. Seminars, Workshops, and Conferences

Attending conferences, seminars, and workshops is always a great opportunity for me as a student. Meeting people from different countries is a perfect time for me to learn and enrich my knowledge in different aspects of things. These conferences, seminars, and workshops give me insight into different topics delivered by different speakers coming from different places around the world.

3.1 Gender Equality at Work

This was my first seminar as a student at Nanhua University. It was presented by Amy Huey-Ling Shee, a law professor. Her topic was gender equality at work. She explained the laws of Taiwan and the culture of Taiwan as well. This seminar provides learning opportunities, especially for us new to this country. We are informed about the law of Taiwan in this matter.



(Photos taken during the seminar entitled "Gender Equality at Work".)

3.2 Bamboo weaving workshop

Bamboo weaving is my first workshop at Nanhua University. The instructor showed us how to weave bamboo to make designs. At first, I found it difficult because it was kind of complicated, but at the same time, I enjoyed doing it. At the end, we finished the workshop and had a flower design.



(Photos taken during and after the bamboo weaving.)

3.3 Workshop Toward Carbon Neutral Agriculture

This workshop was attended by different people from different places around Taiwan and outside Taiwan. Different speakers presented topics. It was a great opportunity for me to gain new knowledge from the speakers. I am glad that I have the chance to experience this workshop.



(After the workshop with Professor Chen Yi-Sung.)



(Photos taken inside the conference hall during the workshop.)

3.4 IFOAM Asia Taiwan Gathering

This was a gathering of IFOAM where Ms. Jennifer Chang, the Executive Director of IFOAM Asia, presented IFOAM activities. She presented how IFOAM works, and I learned a

lot from her. I was so happy during this time because I was able to meet a prominent person in the organic agriculture sector.



(Photos taken before the start of event together with our Professor and Ms. Jennifer Chang.)



(After the event together with other participants.)

3.5 2023-7th Sustainable Development and Green Technology International Symposium

The 2023 7th Sustainable Development and Green Technology International Symposium was amazing. For me, this conference is the highlight of my time studying at Nanhua University as a TEEP student. Delegates coming from different parts of the world are present, and some of them presented topics that gave us insight and knowledge. I've presented my research entitled "Use of different growing media on the growth and production of microgreens: A Comparative Study". I am very grateful to be part of this conference, for I am able to share and gain knowledge from my fellow participants.



(During my presentation of my study entitled "Use of different growing media on the growth and production of microgreens: A Comparative Study".)



(Photo taken after the conference together with all the delegates came from different part of the world.)

4. Internship

In our six months of staying in Taiwan, we experienced lots of things for our internship. From working on the farm to assisting participants in every activity hosted by our department, an internship gives me a lot of learning opportunities, especially in dealing with things that are complicated to do. Being an intern student helped me a lot. I discovered things that I hadn't seen as a student, which molded my ability and capability to do things beyond my expertise. As an agriculture graduate, it is very helpful for me, especially when working on farms, because I can put my learning into action.

4.1 Nanhua University Permaculture Farm

Nanhua Permaculture Farm is a place where we stayed most of the time for six months. In this position, I can say that I really applied my learning in agriculture. I also experienced different kinds of work while staying in this place, from easy to difficult. Working on the farm helps me enhance my capabilities and discover things about myself.



(Land preparation and transplanting of crops)

4.2 City Bear farm

City Bear Farm is an organic farm owned by our professor. Even though this farm does not have a large area, it was maximized very well. The professor had around 50 beehives to take care of. As we went there, the professor showed us how to breed new queen bees. Breeding a queen bee is complicated. I am happy to have experienced myself breeding a queen bee, even though I find it a little difficult because it was my first time doing it. I am grateful that Professor Chen Shih-Shiung gives us the opportunity to visit his farm and breed a new queen bee.



(During the selection of larva for queen bee)



(Placing the frame with artificial queen cell contain of larvae to the bee hive breed new queen bee)

4.3 Scout Camp

During this time, I was assigned to the bee farm to introduce the bees to the scouts. It was a good experience for me, especially every time I saw the scouts listening to my explanation and asking questions. I am very happy for the opportunity given to me, for I have the chance to share my learnings about bees with others.



(During my discussion about bees)



(Assisting on holding the bee frames while taking a photo)

4.4 Taida Horticultural Co.Ltd.

Taida Orchid Horticultural Garden was owned by our professor, Professor Simon Lai. In Taida, I experienced doing tissue culture of orchids and putting the excess roots inside the pots.

I enjoyed at Taida, especially the tissue culture part, because I was really interested in that kind of work. I'm thankful to Professor Lai for letting us experience that kind of work.



(Placing the excess roots inside the pot)



(During tissue culture of orchids)

4.4 Winter Camp at Nanhua University

During winter camp, I learned so many things. Familiarizing children who have different speaking languages than me is challenging for me, but it's not a hindrance as I communicate with the children that are assigned to me, which is not that difficult to handle. I vividly remember how happy I am, even if it's tiring, but seeing those children enjoy my company makes my heart so happy. During different discussions and outdoor activities, they are very participatory. I am so happy to be part of that activity, for they learned things from me that I also learned from them.



(Facilitating during outside activity – planting Lettuce)



(Closing program together with Professor Chen Shih – Shiung and participants that I handle.)

5. Other school activities and Tours

The international office of Nanhua University always planned different kinds of activities for us international students. Participating in different kinds of school activities always gives me excitement. Every time there is activity, I know that I can learn new things. Experiencing Taiwan's culture gives me a lot of knowledge about Taiwan and gives me enjoyment. For me, having the opportunity to visit different places here in Taiwan is a great opportunity. Thank you to the Nanhua University International Office and Professor Hong Yao-Ming for letting us experience and enjoy different tourist spots while staying in Taiwan.

5.1 International Students Multicultural Activity – Hsinchu

This trip was my first as a student here in Taiwan. I enjoyed this trip so much because we visited a village, experienced some activities there, and entered a museum where you could see agricultural things used by ancient people. We also visit another place called Jin-Han Dried Persimmon. We experimented with making a DIY design on a pouch using persimmon.



(Together with Ms. Christina at Hsinchu)



(Together with Ms. Christina at Jin-Han Dried Persimmon)

5.2 International Cultural Festival

During this activity, the international students showcase different foods from their own countries. On this day, we had the chance to introduce food from the Philippines, and we also tried different foods from different countries. It was a good experience for us to share with everyone food from our country so that people who haven't yet visited the Philippines can taste Filipino food that we are proud of.



(During the Cultural Festival selling Filipino Food)



(Photo taken after the event with our senior Ate Marilyn Aldamar)

5.3 Xizhou Garden

This trip was enjoyable. We met our friend Anna, and she took us around the place. We also met Professor Chen Yi-Sung, and he introduced the place to us. Beautiful flowers are everywhere, and the food is delicious.



(Together with our friend Anna at Home & Garden)



(Photo taken before we leave Xizhou Garden with professor Chen Yi-Sung)

5.4 2023 Taiwan International Orchids Show

Professor Simon Lai brings us to an orchids exhibit. The Taiwan International Orchids Show is an exhibit of different types of orchids from different orchid companies in Taiwan and

even other countries. It was an amazing experience for me because I had seen different varieties of orchids, from small orchid flowers to large orchid flowers.



(Experiencing Taiwan International Orchids Show)

5.5 Purple Butterfly Valley at Maolin

Purple Butterfly Valley is located in Maolin; we visited the place where you can see beautiful butterflies during the winter season. We are not able to see butterflies there because they have migrated to another place, but I can say that the place is beautiful and peaceful.



(After the Tour and short discussion at Maolin Butterfly Valley)



(Professor explaining to me about butterflies)

5.6 Fo Guang Shan

This place is so beautiful and peaceful. I am glad that I have the chance to visit these kinds of places. They take us around the whole place, including the underground museum. I was so amazed by the place where antiques and valuable things are kept. While roaming around the place, all I can see is a beautiful scenic view.



(Enjoying every part of Fo Guang Shan)

5.7 International Students Multicultural Activity - Alishan

The trip to Alishan was my last trip as a TEEP student in Taiwan. It's because I love nature that I really love and enjoy the place. It was so relaxing and peaceful. We walk around the rainforest, where you can see animals living freely and century-old trees that are conserved and protected.



(Together with other International Students)



(Enjoying fog at the mountain of Alishan)

6. Conclusion

Indeed, being a TEEP student is a great opportunity for me. Even though it is challenging, it helps me discover things that go beyond my expectations. Staying at Nanhua University gives me the opportunity to learn more and enrich my abilities and skills, especially in agriculture aspects. I would like to thank all of the people who have been there for me since day one, my family, friends, and professors at Nanhua University who impart lots of knowledge to me, and especially Professor Hong Yao Ming and the Ministry of Education here in Taiwan, for this one-of-a-kind opportunity.