

Report on Participation in Overseas Research in Taiwan

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Year level: M2

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I used to think how my friends from Taiwan refused to be addressed as Chinese, but as Taiwanese instead. Taiwan, which is officially the Republic of China, is a fascinating small country in the middle of the East China Sea. The long history of how Taiwan 'separated' its activity from the Chinese mainland has enabled the country to provide resources independently. Even though its GDP is the lowest among the top countries, Taiwan continues to encounter several issues, especially in economics and the business sector, besides its political issues. After visiting the country, I think there are several notable points about the country.

First, internationally, the position of Taiwan entirely depends on the relationship between China and USA as highlighted by Associate Prof. Lu from National Chengchi University (NCCU). The election of Trump as the US president has resulted in a significant impact on Taiwan. For instance, uncertainty about whether the US would acknowledge One China or build the partnership with Taiwan as an independent nation (Two Chinas). Although the USA has never signed an official memorandum, the relationship with Taiwan is 'officially unofficial'. That means that both countries cooperate in many regards but there is little or no direct contact among the leaders. On the other hand, with China, Taiwan is supposed to be in a non-negotiable position, although later I found out that Taiwan exports mostly to China.

Second, regarding the economic development of Taiwan, Prof Zheng from NCCU mentioned several points. While Taiwan succeeds in establishing prominent corporations, the brand has not yet been internationalized. At the moment, they focused merely on supplying components rather than generating a final product. The so-called brain drain phenomenon which sees Taiwanese people work overseas due to the low income within the country. It requires the right strategies to work on how the regulations trigger the corporates to produce more and optimize the labor market.

Through this trip, I also got a chance to meet and discuss with local business players. First, was the Taiwan-Japan Relationship Association (TJRA) where we learned a lot from the director. Although Taiwan was a Japanese colony, Taiwan maintains a tight partnership with Japan considering that some Japanese brands are now under Taiwan's enterprise. Second is the visit to the medium sized technology company, LITE-ON. I must say that actually, LITE-ON is quite a big corporation in providing semiconductors and other technologically advanced peripherals. People might not know what LITE-ON is, but its components are attached in so many electronic devices equipping our daily lives.

On the very next day, the group went to a rural area in the northern area of Taipei. In the Sanzhi and Zhuzhihu districts I learned about rural development. I used to think that rural areas and its people tend not to be innovation or development oriented. However, these places have taught me that rural areas also could be well maintained and developed. In Sanzhi local people work together hand-in-hand to create a decent environment. Looking at how they prepare, perform, and harvest, the small-sized home agriculture, got me realized that other rural areas could do the same things. Despite being termed rural, to me, Sanzhi was a sophisticated village able to meet food sufficiency.

My research interest probably does not directly relate to any of the sites on the program, but I learned many lessons. Currently, I am researching ride-sharing services or what is known as online-taxi. Taipei represents the topic that I would like to discuss. During the trip, I used the ride-sharing services, Uber, to go somewhere after the tight schedule with the groups. It was exciting that the mobile application was quite convenient in Taipei considering the fact that Uber was banned there. Later, my experience as Uber's user in Taipei helped me to emphasize my topic in my presentation in the workshop held by the School of Economics, National Taiwan University. By sharing my ideas, the participants, both students from Kyoto University and National Taiwan University, provided feedback and comments on how I could improve.

I would say that participating in the Taiwan Trip provided many opportunities to study further about East Asia. Moreover, I intend to explore the potential growth of entrepreneurship and digital industry in the region. I will soon begin to research in Indonesia to understand the phenomena of digital-based entrepreneurship. Upon completing the work, I would like to enhance the topic in other countries in East and South-east Asia, especially among the emerging countries. Also, the most important is that now I know how to address citizens of Taiwan correctly.