

Once upon a time somewhere in Asia

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Once upon a time somewhere in Asia, a country called the People's Republic of China was my destination for further studies. Before I left my native country on the West Coast of Africa "*Sierra Leone*". I was very cheerful to have gotten such a privilege to broaden my *academic horizon*. I did not consider any factors that will make things easy for my stay in China. I thought on my arrival, I will easily get a student job that will enhance me to send money for relatives especially my wife and children as easily done in other parts of the world.

Meanwhile, the wonderful day finally came and I departed for China in August 2015 for a two years' Master's program in *Computer Science and Technology* at the *University of Electronic Science and Technology of China* in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China. I was so excited but rather unfortunate, I was quarantined for 27 days (restricting movement), as my country was just relieved of the Ebola epidemic by the World Health Organization that ravaged the country for almost two years. My struggles started from that point hindering my registration on time. After the completion of my restriction, I registered and started attending lectures which were not easy, and I also had to register for all the courses individually, asking friends to help me with previous lecture slides, submission of assignments, and perform medical within a short time.

Moreover, my experience as a partial scholarship candidate inflicted numerous setbacks for my daily survival. The scholarship package only includes tuition and medical insurance. The rest of the other burdens was put on my shoulders, such as accommodation, internet, food, transportation, and even the medical insurance because of late registration, and I was without a medical insurance card. Not mentioning my first impression of China of getting a job to sustain my expenses and help my family at home. Unfortunately, I searched for jobs over a year with a Chinese friend Wanjinhun, but to no avail, each time they will ask for specific requirements like native speakers, TEFL/TESOL, and others. I also attended several interviews but could not succeed even though I was a teacher at home. To my greatest surprise, all the requirements are only meant for people coming from non-*English speaking countries*. Here in China particularly Chengdu, native speakers mean skin color and if you are black, then you are not qualified. It is ridiculous because the official language of my country is English and is taught from nursery to university. Therefore, due to the above reasons, I am was without a job making life difficult for me. On the other hand, I was barely surviving on the little amount I saved while working at home and as well from my father Professor Dr. Paul Kamara. The other predicament was the variation of seasons in China and that of my country. They had four seasons (Summer, Winter, Spring, and Autumn), and unlike my native home (Dry & Raining Seasons). My first winter was horrible

because of the intensity of the cold, and also the summer was too hot for me, but I had to adapt to these conditions painfully.

Furthermore, Chengdu is a nice and modern city with wonderful and beautiful ancient sceneries and its spicy food. Few places I visited were the Ya'an Bifengxia Base of China Conservation and Research Center of Giant Panda, Jiuzhai Valley National Park, Sichuan Science and Technology Museum, People's Park, Happy Valley, Poly Garden Phase II, the Three Holy Garden, Tianfu Square, and many other places I cannot remember their names. I also tried many Sichuan foods like Sichuan hotpot, Spicy deep-fried chicken, Dan dan noodles, fried rice, and many other delicious foods. Notwithstanding, the people are amazingly hospitable especially the youths who are always willing to help foreigners, maybe because most of them at least speak little English as compared to the old ones who will instead be looking at you furiously as if you were from another planet. If you get lost in the city never dare to ask old people for help and interestingly, sometimes when you attempt to speak to them, they will either ignore or walk away from you. Another unfortunate situation is those private taxi drivers cheating habit, they always cheat foreigners if you can't speak Chinese and my advice is to instead hire DIDI via Wechat or other online transportation applications where pricing is determined according to the distance. The police and security apparatus in China are helpful and friendlier than most western countries. If you have a problem while touring the city never hesitate to ask for their help and surprisingly, most speak English but pretend as if they do not.

Conclusively, I, therefore, people planning to study in Asian countries specifically China to consider certain issues before traveling. If it is partial scholarship with tuition and medical insurance only included in the scholarship pack, kindly declined because in most cases, the medical insurance does not work and in general, never accept any kind of partial scholarship except if you are from a rich family. If it is a fully-funded scholarship like the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC), full university scholarship, full Provincial or other scholarships, then it is worthy or acceptable. My reason is that your impression of securing a job while studying in China may likely not come true and even if it comes true, it is not enough to support you and your relatives at home. The second reason is that the living standard is expensive. The other major problem is the language. Sometimes people want to help but how to communicate with you is the problem. Maybe even the job issue is because of the language barrier or cultural concepts. Interestingly, if you are from a wealthy family, China is a perfect place to study due to the wonderful ancient sceneries, the land, cultural practice, and the people. Once you are in China, you will never want to go back home especially Chengdu, because of the hospitable and peaceful environments with modern architectural designs that are unique from the rest of the world. I love the People's Republic of China even though with few constraints illustrated in the above passages. The author upon returning home with foreign certificates earned the position of the Director of Academic Affairs at the Institute of Advanced Management and Technology (IAMTECH) from July 2017 to May 2019. Currently a lecturer at the Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology (EBKUST) – Sierra Leone.