

Principal Chung on RTHK Radio 3 “The 123 Show” – the Best in Class, A Successful Leader!

On 15th April 2015, Principal Chung was invited to an interview on RTHK Radio 3 "The 1 2 3 Show" where he talked about the journey of his studies and career as well as how he became “the Best in Class” -- A Successful Leader.



I: interviewer

P: Principal Chung

I: Looking back at your teaching career path so far, it’s not very smooth or easy. You had your very first taste of teaching when you were the leader of the voluntary group at Form 6, after your HKCEE, teaching the fishermen in Aberdeen, how were those experiences?

C: When I was studying in F6, I was the Chairman of a social service group called Community Project. The group had different services for the underprivileged like serving the visually impaired at Ebenezer School in Pokfulam, the mentally handicapped children in Wong Chuk Hang as well as the aged in Sandy Bay. I also had the chance to teach in a voluntary evening school for adults in Shek Pai Wan.

Even at that time, the 9-year compulsory education had been introduced for some time, in the 80’s, many fishermen and factory workers received no schooling at all when they were young, and still illiterate. For self-enhancement and better employment opportunities, they chose to study after work in the voluntary evening school where I taught.

Students nowadays seem to take the right of receiving schooling for granted. Some even lost their interests in learning. On the contrary, the adult students I taught at that time were extremely eager and persistent in learning and they were very respectful to teachers. Their enthusiasm in learning deeply touched me and inspired me to become a professional teacher after my graduation.

I: I heard you have been working 4-5 part-time jobs, apart from your day-time teaching at St Joseph's College to earn enough money to study in the UK for degree. How did you achieve that?



C: Many people said that the competition for university places nowadays is too keen in Hong Kong that only around 18-20% of DSE candidates could get into government subsidized programmes. I may say, the competition at my time was even greater because there were only two universities – the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Being an Advanced Level Examination candidate, naturally my goal was to enter HKU for a university degree. Since places were so limited and with just average results, I failed to achieve my target.

Subsequently, I enrolled in the College of Education to be trained as a teacher. Knowing that to become a knowledgeable and proficient teacher, I needed to obtain a university degree after all. So I saved up the money to enable myself to seek more advanced and better education abroad. This objective posed a very great financial problem to me.

I came from a big but poor family with 8 children. I knew that my parents could hardly support me to further my studies overseas. That's why I had to seek every opportunity to save up money to carry out my study plan.

After my graduation from the College of Education, I worked full-time at a secondary school that is St. Joseph's College. To earn enough money for my study, I altogether worked 4 part-time jobs with my limited time. I worked as a teacher in Stanley Prison and the other 3 as private English tutors. After working for two years, I was able to save \$70,000 and successfully enrolled in a university degree programme at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in the UK.

Actually, the \$70,000 I have saved up was not enough to cover all the expenses for my studies. I needed altogether \$80,000 -- \$40,000 for the course free, another \$40,000 for the accommodation and living expenses. Therefore, I needed to spend very carefully. Every day, I had no breakfast at all, only a small piece of bread for lunch and the cheapest meat and vegetables for dinner.

To make ends meet, I worked in a Chinese take away restaurant in the evening as a cook assistant. During weekends, I went to teach the BBC that is British-born Chinese children Chinese at a Sunday school.

Life was extremely hard but memorable and rewarding as the colleagues at the restaurant and

the children at the Sunday school were nice to me and they have all become my good friends now. Besides, I was able to finish my course and get a university degree with the limited saving and income, that's what I'm proud of. Looking back, it's my target and my determination to be a teacher that gave me the motivation to work hard, despite the financial and environmental difficulties. I guess many students nowadays seem have forgotten the saying "Where there's a will, there's a way".

I: You were not really contented with the university degree that you got at that time, but you went on to do something more in order for you to be in your position right now as a Principal.

C: I believe in life-long learning and I have tried to practice this because knowledge is boundless.

After finishing my degree programme in the UK, I returned to St. Joseph's College and became a Graduate Master. As an English teacher, I saw that many Chinese students have difficulties in learning the language. And I believe that knowledge of translation with better understanding of the structure, the vocabulary and the style of both languages, can help me understand how Chinese students learn English. That's why in 1992, I decided to take a master degree course in Translation and Interpretation at the City University of Hong Kong. I hoped with the knowledge, skills and perspectives I gained from the course, I could help my students learn English easier and better.

I: As an educator, it's not very common for a teacher to become a Principal without becoming a Vice Principal before, but you defied the norm.

C: I served St Joseph's College for a period of time. As I have served longer, I have more chances of getting involved in different areas of school administration. And by and by, I have developed an interest in it.

At that time, I had a chance to be Panel Head of Integrated Humanities, teacher-in-charge of Parent Teacher Association, member of School Development Council. All these involvements helped me develop the interest in the administrative work, and I also derived satisfaction from it. So in these duties, I saw the importance of school organization. It can help determine the efficiency of educating students successfully. Without a proper interaction between different groups of people, very often, even very good policy could not be implemented successfully, and finally the students suffer. That's why I have the determination to become an administrator.

I also saw the need to equip myself for the challenging tasks and enhance my profession. That's why I enrolled in the master degree course in Educational Administration and

Management at the University of Hong Kong in 2001. Later on, I also took the preparation for Principalship Course and fulfilled the requirement set by the EDB and was finally awarded the Certification for Principalship.

With these qualifications, I am qualified to be the principal. And very luckily, I can get into this position. Being a principal, it puts me in a better position to pursue my values, beliefs and vision on quality education. I can serve a wider spectrum of people. Apart from focusing on academic achievements of students, I can collaborate with different people, different stakeholders, mobilizing them to work for the benefit of the school and I can also help the students to pursue all-round education.

I: You are one of the most hardworking persons that I have ever met! I have even lost count of how many courses you have taken over the years. For you to get into this school, it's another very touching story, can you tell us a bit more about this?

C: I have always been living on Hong Kong Island and POCA Wong Siu Ching Secondary School was rather unknown to me until the school was recruiting a new principal. Since then I began to research its background and related information. Incidentally, I had a few friends living in Tsuen Wan, who had children studying in the school. They had very high regard for the school. They told me that it was a simple and unpretentious school where students were respectful, hardworking and with good language ability. Besides, the teachers were very dedicated. They are always willing to sacrifice their time and effort to give extra guidance to students with academic, family or emotional problems. The school impressed me so much that I was eager to apply for the vacant principal post in 2010, and fortunately, I was successful.

I: After you became the Principal, I heard of you giving out red pockets for students ahead of their public examination, why do you have such an idea, and is there anything you like most or dislike most being a Principal?

C: It is a kind of blessing from me to the students. I think money is not an important matter and the amount is not great at all, but the kind of support and encouragement is the most important. I always regard myself as the Head Teacher. Some people call me Principal, I prefer using Head Teacher. In the UK, they call the principal, head teacher, as he is also one of the teachers, but the head only. I would like to join other teachers in our responsibility to nurture the next generation, for their own good as well as for the well beings of the society. As the head myself, I have more liberty to allocate resources, implement policies and programmes to broaden students' horizons, consolidate their skills and improve their attitude towards learning and life. I have got more freedom.

But of course, to be a principal, I need to face a lot of challenges. On relationship with students, I still remember when I was a teacher, I could establish very good personal relationship with my students, seeing their growth, walking along with them in times of their ups and downs as well as sharing their joy and sorrow. Many of my former students have become my good friends.

As an administrator, I have less time to communicate with my students personally. I need to spend most of my time working in the office reading piles of documents, making plans and decisions, attending meetings both inside and outside school, handling student matters and managing crisis. It's very busy. Yet, I won't forget to turn up and support my students in various activities like interschool sports competitions, music festival, and community services. I'd like to show my students that I'm always with them. And also from these activities, I'd like to know what they need from the school and from me.