

EDUCATOR WITH THE RIGHTEOUS AND KIND HEART



Distinguished
Alumnus

Professor Chung-Kwong POON, if anything else, is an educator at heart. “I think that for some students, if you can show them support and encouragement during the times they feel lost and hopeless, you could change their entire lives,” he shared. With this belief close at heart, Professor Poon took it upon himself to meet with the more “problematic” students individually during his tenure as the Dean of the Faculty of Science at HKU. In one instance, he shared how he found out about one student’s struggle with his living conditions and decided to pull some strings to have him be accommodated at St. John’s college. That was how much of an educator Professor Poon was at his core.

PROF. CHUNG-KWONG POON

1963 BSc (General) Graduate
1964 BSc (Special) Graduate

Major Achievements

- President Emeritus of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (1991-2008)
- Dean of Faculty of Science, The University of Hong Kong (1983-1990)
- Appointed Member of Legislative Council (1985-1990)
- Recipient of Leader of the Year Awards (Education) (2008)
- Gold Bauhinia Star
- Justice of the Peace

“Face the world with a thankful heart,
and the grace will be all around you.”

Before Professor Poon first began taking up more administrative duties as the Dean, he had a stellar career as a researcher, even being nominated twice for the Nobel Prize in Chemistry by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Yet, taking into consideration Hong Kong’s financial situation at that time, the research environment, and the amount of resources

available, he thought that it would have been challenging to achieve any breakthroughs in his work. Conversely, gazing upon the path to becoming an educator, he saw that his efforts could potentially have a wider impact — as the Dean, his actions could affect the entire Faculty; as the President of a university, the whole university community.



With this foresight and ambition in mind, and seeing the potential in what was then the Hong Kong Polytechnic, Professor Poon took up the post of Director of the institution in 1991, and spearheaded the transformation of the institution into a full-fledged university by 1994. He saw The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) not as a potential contender to the ranks of HKU and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, but rather, as

a center of applied research and technical education that complemented the other universities in supplying Hong Kong society with a workforce equipped with a diverse set

of skills. Over the 18 years of his leadership, he had groomed PolyU and had overseen its growth into the respectable tertiary institution it was now.

After his retirement, Professor Poon now devoted his time and

efforts into non-profit work. His organisation, Virya Foundation Ltd., set up scholarships that sponsored underprivileged children in rural China to complete a bachelor’s degree at their desired universities, as well as to support their growth through character education workshops and mentorship programs. Asked on how he felt about the legacy he had left both in HKU and PolyU, he casually replied: “不在其位，不謀其政” (He who is not in any particular office has nothing to do with plans for the administration of its duties); instead, directing his efforts in other endeavors, in the process reaching out to even more students beyond Hong Kong that had benefitted from his generosity and philanthropy.

Professor Poon had devoted 40 years of his life advancing university education in Hong Kong. In his retirement, he continued to be a strong proponent of education as an equaliser and instrument of social mobility. His life story was the quintessence of what being an educator meant, and his contributions to education in Hong Kong were testament to the saying that not all heroes wear capes.



STUDENT REPORTER

“I was awestruck meeting Professor Poon in person and hope to make a groundbreaking contribution to society in the future.”



John Joson Ng, BSc Student
(double major in Chemistry and Biological Sciences)