

A JOURNEY TO REALITY

INTERVIEW



It is not uncommon to see people holding the perception that studying science is too “narrow”, in the sense that unless you continue working in the academic field of science, what you have learnt is hard to link with the reality. Yet our alumni have broken this “myth” and Professor Frederick Wing Huen HO is one of them. Studying science is not merely the acquisition of scientific knowledge, it is also a training of mind, i.e. you learn how to observe and how to think; and your mindset largely determines how you tackle the real world.

PROF. FREDERICK WING HUEN HO
1966 BSc Graduate

Major Achievements

- Adjunct Professor, Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science, HKU
- Occasional Statistical Consultant for United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific
- Independent Non-Executive Director, WWPKG Holdings Co., Ltd.
- Chairman of Hong Kong PHAB Association
- Commissioner for Census and Statistics (Hong Kong: 1992-2005)
- Chairman of the Committee on Statistics of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (1994-1998)
- Vice-president of the International Association for Official Statistics (1997-1999)
- Member of the (Hong Kong) Hang Seng Index Advisory Committee (1994-2006)
- Statistics Advisor, National Bureau of Statistics, People’s Republic of China (2006-14)
- Silver Bauhinia Star by Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (2006); OBE by UK Government (1993); and Spallart Medal by International Statistical Institute (1997)

Professor Ho has mastered the skills in transferring knowledge and skills learnt from science to solving more complex problems in places apart from textbooks and lectures.

A remarkable achievement of Professor HO was the tenure of the position of Commissioner for Census and Statistics of Hong Kong from 1992 to 2005. He also held many statistics-related appointments locally and internationally, in particular the Chairmanship in an important United Nations Committee on Statistics during 1994-1998, a period that straddled the historic year 1997, when Hong Kong was re-united with China. Although he excelled and achieved much in the Statistics field, Professor Ho actually started off majoring in Mathematics and Chemistry, two highly theoretical subjects.



He only took one Statistics course during his undergraduate study. He joined the Civil Service immediately after graduation. Starting with the then Education Department and moving over to the Census and Statistics Department a few years later, he had a total civil service career of 39 years. His knowledge on Statistics, especially in socio-economic statistics, was acquired from extra courses he took after his graduation. What has brought him that far?

Professor Ho is extremely knowledgeable about a wide range of topics. His curiosity, analytical skills and scientific mindset empower him to explore and succeed. He has unique insights on international issues such as the trade war between the United States and China, to local issues like the land use problem. He analyses the issues from both a statistical point of view and a more societal angle. He says the most important skill of Statistics is the ability to use numbers and data to analyse problems that are related to people and society. Being able to relate science to people is one very important quality of a successful scientist



in every sense. That is what has led him to actively promote public’s understanding in Statistics and the numbers behind public issues during his term of service as the Commissioner. The analytical and observational skills required to finish these jobs are exactly what HKU Science has given him.



While Professor Ho analyses scopes of societal issues, he does not stop there. He devotes himself more than that, especially after retirement from the Civil Service in 2005. He is committed to serve and advocate equal community participation of persons with and without disabilities via Hong Kong PHAB (Physically Handicapped and Able-Bodied) Association. Professor Ho not only looks at the numbers, he strives to promote mutual respect and integration of every member in society. This undertaking apart, he is involved in several other organisations in education, health and social services. He has also been serving the Hong Kong Association for the Advancement of Science and Technology as its Vice-president.

“Hold fast to dreams. For if dreams die, life is like a broken-winged bird that cannot fly”, a quote from poet, playwright and novelist Langston Hughes was what Professor Ho would like to advise all of us. You would never know what will come up next and so, be prepared. Be prepared to seize your opportunity and chance. Youth never comes twice.

STUDENT REPORTER

“Interviewing with Prof. Ho is an absolutely inspiring experience. He has given me insights in all aspects of life including social issues, school life and personal growth. Very glad for this opportunity!”



Celia Yan Yu YANG, BSc Student
(major in Geology, minor in Biochemistry)

“ Sometimes life is hard and will not go as the way you expect, take it easy and smile. ”