

Honorary Fellow A Citation



The Honourable Cheung Man Kwong, BSSc

Dreams have always been a part of the human experience. The philosopher meditates on his dream, while the politician strives for its realisation. Over 30 years ago the Honourable Cheung Man Kwong, while still a student, was already a serious thinker on university development and social directions, and a formidable discourses on these and other subjects of current interest in the student newspaper. Three decades have elapsed and Mr Cheung is still as committed as he was in his youth, to the cause of bringing his political and educational ideals to actuality. He is the representative of the education functional constituency on the Legislative Council, the President of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (commonly known as the Teachers' Union), and an Executive Committee Member of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movement in China. In realising his commitments to society through action, his efforts have been strenuous and tenacious.

The Honourable Cheung Man Kwong was born in Hong Kong in 1954, and graduated with a Bachelor of Social Science degree from The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1978. He majored in Economics, but his first foray into the working life took the form of a supply teacher's position in a primary school, an incident which marked the beginning of Mr Cheung's lifelong association with education. It was the ruling of the Government at the time that university graduates should not teach in primary schools, but, despite his most arduous attempts to understand the underlying rationale, the policy was still beyond his comprehension. This incomprehension in turn gave rise to the study of the rationality and practicability of governmental structure and administration, from the angle of Hong Kong's education infrastructure. From that time on a young and committed intellectual has come to the forum of educational polity in Hong Kong. Mr Cheung subsequently taught at the Kwun Tong and Whampoa Primary Schools of the Grantham College of Education Past Students' Association, and in 1990 was elected President of the Teachers' Union, a position he has held for 19 years. From 1991 to 1997 he was a member of the then Legislative Council representing the education sector. Since the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, he has been the representative of the education sector on the Legislative Council again since 1998. He was a member of the Education Commission from 1993 to 2005.

In these 30 years, Mr Cheung has personally participated in every single phase and event in educational development and reform in Hong Kong. These have pertained to kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, and universities, and ranged from the quality of teaching to the rights and privileges of practitioners. He has a deep understanding of and genuine concern for all these matters. Under his leadership, the Teachers' Union was successful in its petitions for direct grants to kindergartens, for small class teaching in primary and secondary schools, and to assist surplus teachers to switch to new careers. He also led efforts in urging the Government to carry out improvement works on primary and secondary school buildings, and in the



fight for integrated education subsidies. He played an important role in the advocacy for the reintroduction of a four-year university curriculum, and for the establishment of research funds in institutions of tertiary education. He was a champion for quality education, for teachers' equitable rights and privileges, for improvement in their working conditions, and in the general elevation of their professional standards. Mr Cheung's efforts are always found where the cause is just, and his participation is always whole-hearted. His conviction and action have won the support and collaboration of school principals, teachers and parents, as well as educational organisations in Hong Kong. In the collective effort towards the development and reform of education in Hong Kong, the hard work of Mr Cheung is of immense and profound significance.

It is an ancient saying that it takes a decade for a tree to grow but a century to establish one's good character. Certainly the diligence of Mr Cheung is not confined to the growth of a solitary tree or a single individual. His concern lies rather beyond the façade of individuals and the trees to the totality of the education system and its structure and operation. His view is that planting trees without planning will only result in chaos, and indeed in his mind is a comprehensive blueprint and *modus operandi* for his ideal plantation. His starting point is based on fundamental education concepts, and he proceeds to review the existing educational structure in its entirety, assesses the effectiveness of educational policies in force, promotes dialogue and collaboration between teachers and administrators, and helps to build up interaction among teachers, students and parents. He is aware that the development of education must be firmly grounded on a desire to better the lives of the people, and that the principal aim of education should be the training of the community's human resources. Much as he respects tradition, he does not hesitate to propose reviews and offer critique, and for future development he sets his sight on the younger generations, and on how they, in the dynamics of east-west cultural exchange, may fulfil their roles to perpetuate their heritage and inspire to posterity. Mr Cheung is the only representative of the education sector in the Legislative Council of Hong Kong, and his courage in speech and action, and his strong commitment to his causes, have come to be much admired. What he has demonstrated may perhaps be expressed by the ancient expression *unum contra mundum* or, more plainly put, one against the world. His conviction might not necessarily be shared by everyone in the community, and his effort may not bring forth success in every attempt. But he never fails to impress with his audacity and unswerving commitment. He is always at the forefront of the legion of educationists, and motivates his colleagues with his integrity as well as his faith in their good work. Come rain or shine, he is always there to work with those who share his vision, and his beliefs have not deviated one bit from his first causes. His courage and his perseverance have won him the recognition and praise of the community, and he has been re-elected to the Legislative Council time and again for four consecutive terms.

The Honourable Cheung Man Kwong was a Council Member of the Chinese University from 1998 to 2008, in which capacity he participated actively in the deliberation and implementation of various development projects by offering judicious views and wise counsels. The ordinances that provide for the establishment of new colleges at the Chinese University



were introduced to the legislature by Mr Cheung, and eventually passed by the Legislative Council. Mr Cheung has always benefited his alma mater with his enthusiasm and presence at various alumni activities. In 2003 he took to the stage and played a role in *Of Phoenix Lineage*, a play specially written and produced in celebration of the University's 40th anniversary. Over the years he has also officiated at countless college activities and events and addressed the assemblies.

On one occasion which was a graduation ceremony at New Asia College, Mr Cheung, as the Guest of Honour, quoted the famous lines of Gu Xiancheng, which roughly translate as "the sound of the wind, the rain, and the recital of the classics, all register deeply in my hearing; the affairs of the family, the state and the world, all register deeply on my heart." With these words he exhorted the graduating students to a greater commitment to the country and the community. Mr Cheung is indeed a man of his word, and is always given to the precepts of reading copiously and putting what is deemed right to action. He is never negligent of affairs of the state which he takes to be his personal responsibilities. In a different context, the sound of wind and rain connotes romantic sentiments. He remembers that soon after graduation and his wedding, he, carrying a large satchel of books and in the company of his wife, moved into a small house erected on the top floor of a building. This house happened to have a tiled roof and, when it rained, he waxed lyrical. "The raindrops kept falling on the tiles, producing the most beautiful music. As I woke up in the middle of the night I listened, and a sense of romance overwhelmed me." In this microcosmos shared by the young couple alone, they sang *My Motherland* together and spent their days living out their ideals. When his daughter was young, she was often delighted by seeing her father on television, and burst into the heartiest shouts and laughter. Now as an adult, she shares her father's beliefs and takes part in his actions. She said, "I am proud of what my father does. I have learnt perseverance and justice from him."

The ancients said that "an upright person is one who will not be corrupted by wealth and positions, nor moved by poverty and lowliness, nor subjugated by presence and force." In 2008, the slogan for Mr Cheung's election campaign was "Let us strive together again and walk through the wind and the rain, with beliefs firm as before." Along this path Mr Cheung has soldiered on for 30 years, and his commitment to democracy and his ideals in education have remained unchanged. He is an upright person in the Hong Kong community, and an illustrious alumnus of the Chinese University. Mr Chairman, may I present the Honourable Cheung Man Kwong for the award of an Honorary Fellowship of the University.