

## **Advice from a veteran teacher**

### **A balance between professional and personal development**

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For most students, pursuing academic and eventually professional excellence seems to be the most important, if not the only, goal to strive for. Peggy Chan, a senior lecturer from the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Shatin), tells us how and why personal integrity and professional attitude are just as crucial in a student's development.

#### ***Tell us about your study and career background.***

After obtaining my bachelor's degree in accountancy, I went on to complete a master's degree with a focus on international accounting, and another master's degree in information technology in accounting upon my Institute's recommendation. Before starting my teaching tenure here at the Institute of Vocational Education (IVE), I spent more than five years working in CPA firms and became a qualified accountant. I specialize in areas including taxation, compliance and tax planning.

#### ***What made you move into teaching? Does your previous professional experience help with your teaching?***

Teaching has been an aspiration of mine ever since I was little. During the course of my studies I developed a strong interest in accounting, which was the main reason for me going into the profession after graduation. However, even after going into professional practice I still found myself fascinated by the idea of being a teacher. That is why eventually I began teaching.

I enjoy teaching, especially young people. Here at IVE, as the focus is on vocational training, it is crucial that we bring to students knowledge or skills that may not be available in textbooks, but which is essential for them to survive in the real world. This is where my past experience becomes useful and valuable, as I am able to share with students skills such as how to deal with both your superiors and subordinates in a suitable manner.

#### ***What is your teaching method?***

As the majority of students here are young people, they are more adept at multi-tasking and knowledge-based learning. They are also easily bored. I think it is therefore crucial that apart from mere impartation of knowledge, teachers should also be able to share real life experience with students. For instance, here at our institute we have a number of teachers who are in fact members of the Hong Kong Institute of CPAs. They can talk to students about the latest standards and practices in the profession, as well as providing insights on the actual needs and demands of today's employers. In addition, I emphasize attitude and ethics when I teach, as I believe these are aspects that the profession considers very important for all accounting personnel.

### ***How well are your students doing?***

Generally I think our students perform quite well, and often display a positive and enthusiastic attitude. The majority of our graduates are interested in taking a top-up degree at local or overseas universities if financial conditions allow. I can still recall a few years back, one of our graduates finished his accounting degree with first-class honours and came back to the campus to take graduation photos with us. Other students have also pursued further academic options and went on to obtain master's degrees.

### ***What are your views on professional qualifications, and in particular, the AAT qualification?***

While around 60% of our graduates choose to pursue further studies, the remaining students begin working after finishing their programme here. This may be due to financial constraints. Many of them, after joining the workforce, continue to engage themselves in part-time studies in order to keep on improving themselves.

In my opinion, qualifications such as AAT are both useful and helpful for students. In particular, the AAT Examination, together with the Professional Bridging Examination, allows students an alternative route towards qualifying as a Certified Public Accountant. This opens up more doors for fresh graduates, who may have little or no experience, to stand out from others. These exams not only serve as a road to more advanced qualifications, but they are also professionally recognized signposts which signify to potential employers the ability of these graduates.

### ***What is your advice for accounting students in Hong Kong?***

Firstly, competence is highly valued in the accounting profession. There is simply no easy way out of the necessary process of acquisition of knowledge in order to achieve such competence. Secondly, students should pay attention to their personal integrity. When they join the workforce, they will encounter temptation. This is particularly true in accounting, a profession that deals primarily with money. It is therefore important that accounting personnel must be able to uphold a professional level of integrity. Last but not least, one of the virtues most highly valued by employers is a positive and healthy attitude in an employee. As this cannot be achieved overnight, I strongly encourage students to start nurturing a healthy attitude towards both learning and working today.

