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Press Release

HKU Education Professor Frederick Leung named the first Changjiang Scholar in Mathematics Education by the Chinese Ministry of Education

Professor Frederick Leung of the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong has been named a Changjiang Scholar 2013/14 by the Ministry of Education in China. He is the first Changjiang Scholar in the field of Mathematics Education. Most Scholars appointed in the past were in the fields of Medicine, Science and Engineering, and few were in the humanities. There were also Scholars in the field of Mathematics and in the field of Education in general, but there has never been a Scholar in the field of Mathematics Education, or indeed in any education discipline (such as Physics Education).

Changjiang Scholars are in the top tier of the country's "High-level Creative Talents Plan" aimed to recruit talented academics, establishing masters in their respective academic disciplines in order to promote development of those disciplines to the highest international level. Appointment of Changjiang Scholars is based on very stringent conditions, such as academic accomplishment, publications, international awards, and so on. Since the implementation of the plan, the country has assembled a large number of scholars with such academic talent. Currently, the number of Changjiang scholars in a university or a region has become an important indicator of the academic strength there.

Professor Leung's appointment has a special significance for the field of Mathematics Education. He commented, "unlike in many parts of the world, Mathematics Education as an academic discipline has not been accorded the recognition that it deserves in this country. It is often considered an insignificant branch under the discipline of Mathematics. I hope my appointment as Changjiang Scholar signifies the recognition by the Mainland Government of the importance of mathematics education as a field of study". It is believed that the appointment of a Hong Kong academic to this position will help change the traditional view of Mathematics Education (and subject education more generally) held by many in the Mainland; recognizing it as a significant area of research.

After appointment as Changjiang Scholar, Professor Leung will continue his collaboration with Southwest University (SWU) in Chongqing to assist in the advancement of research in mathematics education at SWU. Given China's shift of emphasis towards developing the western part of the country and its reliance on Chongqing as a basis for such development, Professor Leung hopes to make use of SWU's strategic location to contribute not only to research there, but also to mathematics education research in institutions in other western parts of the country.

Professor Leung's area of research over the years has been culture and mathematics teaching and learning. This was recognised by the award of the Hans Freudenthal Medal in 2013. In the mainland, research into the mathematics education of ethnic minority children has often been based on a "deficiency model". Ethnic minority children who do not learn mathematics well are considered "slow learners" who need remedial support. However, research in other parts of the world has shown that the problems faced by ethnic minority children in learning mathematics are more a matter of cultural difference rather than cultural deficiency, a view that Professor Leung shares. Since SWU has conducted substantial research on mathematics education of ethnic minority children, and has access to ethnic minority children in a large number of regions and schools, there will be ample opportunity for research to be conducted to explore the influence of culture on their learning styles in mathematics. Professor Leung is also planning to extend his research to ethnic minorities in regions including Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Gansu, and he hopes to achieve a breakthrough in this area of research.

Professor Peter Mathieson, President of the University of Hong Kong, congratulated Professor Leung on his appointment as Changjiang Scholar. He said, "this award reflects how highly your Mainland peers regard your accomplishments in the field of mathematics education". President Mathieson thanked Professor Leung for his contributions to mathematics education, which enhance the recognition of the importance of mathematics education research in the country.

Frederick Koon-Shing Leung's Bio

Frederick Koon-Shing Leung is Professor of the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong. He is the awardee of the Hans Freudenthal Medal 2013, and a senior Fulbright Scholar in 2002-2003. He obtained his Bachelor's degree (Mathematics), Certificate of Education (Mathematics Education) and Master's degree (Testing, Measurement and Evaluation in Education) from the University of Hong Kong, and his PhD (Mathematics Education) from the University of London Institute of Education. Professor Leung has graduated 11 doctoral students, and is currently supervising 9 doctoral students. His areas of research interest include: mathematics teaching and learning, comparative studies of mathematics education, the influence of culture on mathematics learning, etc. Professor Leung is the Principal Investigator of the Hong Kong component of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and he served as member of the Executive Committee of the International Commission on Mathematical Instruction (ICMI) and the Standing Committee of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). He is also Honorary Professor of Beijing Normal University, Southwest University (China), and Zhejiang Normal University.

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