**“A Letter to Hong Kong” by Prof Joseph Jao-yiu Sung 沈祖堯教授**

Prof. Joseph Jao-Yiu Sung, Vice-Chancellor of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, was invited to broadcast his “Letter to Hong Kong” on RTHK on 1 January, 2011. The following is an *unauthorized* freely translated extract. The original Chinese version is available in full from [http://inews.mingpao.com/htm/inews/20110101/gb61123i.htm](http://inews.mingpao.com/htm/inews/20110101/gb61123i.htm).

I am keenly aware that the role of university teacher has changed drastically since my salad days, when I was a medical student at HKU in the seventies. Then we had plenty of opportunities of freely conversing with our teachers, who would generously impart to us their knowledge and thoughts in general. I still remember very well the wise words of Professor Qian Mu (錢穆老師), “Pursuit of knowledge and learning how to conduct oneself in life should advance together at equal pace. Or even better, let them interpenetrate and merge into one.” In the book, *An Encounter*, Mr Zhou Baosong (周保松老師) reminisces on a long dialogue he once had with Professors Chen Te (陳特) and Shen Xuanren (沈宣仁), both from the Philosophy Department, CUHK. They conversed liberally on life and death, good and evil, and philosophy in general. His account greatly moves me.

But university education has since moved on. It has undergone a great change globally. Nations and countries now rival with one another for greater economic booms. Within universities, what appears to motivate scholarly research is no longer a thirst for knowledge or the pursuit of truth, but rather “Resources’, which are keenly competed for. Our community now sets great store on University Rankings, to the neglect of the proper university mission of nurturing the young. University teachers are now rewarded not so much for their scholarship as for their “high productivity”. So, still without very many people noticing, a crisis is emerging. If the present trend continues, we’ll soon be producing self-interested individualists, rather than citizens with vision, open-mindedness, a good sense of civic responsibility, and perceptiveness to other people’s needs. We’ll see a gradual diminishing in our society of creativity, imagination, the humanistic dimension of scientific pursuits, and the ability for in-depth thinking and judicious evaluation. There will be little left in our education which is still of value.

Today our education places high values on information technology and skill acquisition, and not on the pursuit of truth or cultivating creativity. Students spend most of their time memorizing facts, rather than critically reflecting on established ideas and beliefs…. 

I believe that the new General Education will help broaden our students’ horizon, and bring forth in them an understanding and broad-mindedness towards various beliefs, ideologies and schools of thoughts. On that basis, they will develop independent thinking, and the world, I believe, will definitely be better for that.

**Humanness, Creativity, Critical Thinking, and Global Citizenship – these are the core elements in our university education. A university should do more than producing professionals and pushing knowledge frontiers. It should also preserve and disseminate fundamental cultural values, without which it will be soul-less.**