



A/P Erle Lim Chuen Hian
Chair, NUS Teaching Academy
Dept of Medicine

The NUS Teaching Academy: Two Years On

It's been a privilege interacting with both NUS colleagues and the Fellows in the Teaching Academy. Looking back, I am happy with what we've managed to do in the short time together – of course, it's early days yet, but I'm confident that we will continue to work to further the educational cause for staff and students here – and establish NUS at the forefront of tertiary education.

Message from the Chair

As the NUS Teaching Academy (TA) marks its second anniversary, it is timely to reflect on what the TA has accomplished as a think tank, and what remains to be done. We have made progress, engaging the NUS community and making them aware of the role of the TA through projects such as revisions of Peer Review and Student Feedback, the Teaching and Learning Club, *Journal of the NUS Teaching Academy* (JNUSTA), Case Studies, and IT in Education. Most of these are hot-button issues, which were necessary in the initial phase, but the TA is aware of its role as a think tank, i.e. to conduct research, engage in advocacy and policy, strategise, give advice and innovate. The challenge is for the TA to keep the momentum going to complete these projects and, more importantly, to consider what we want to do next – to think of specific strategic issues – so as to add value to the NUS community.

Our recent retreat on 14 May 2011 gave us an opportunity to take stock, cogitate and plan for the future. Two main themes emerged during the retreat, i.e. the need to:

- Engage the NUS community and beyond
- Add value to the NUS community

Engaging the Community

The general perception of colleagues on the ground is that the TA is an “exclusive club” and there is a “disconnect” between the TA and the student body. We feel that the TA needs to engage with:

- 1) The internal community such as Deans, Heads, the teaching community and the students. In this regard, it was suggested that it would be a good idea for subgroups of Fellows to periodically engage them to solicit feedback and enlist support.

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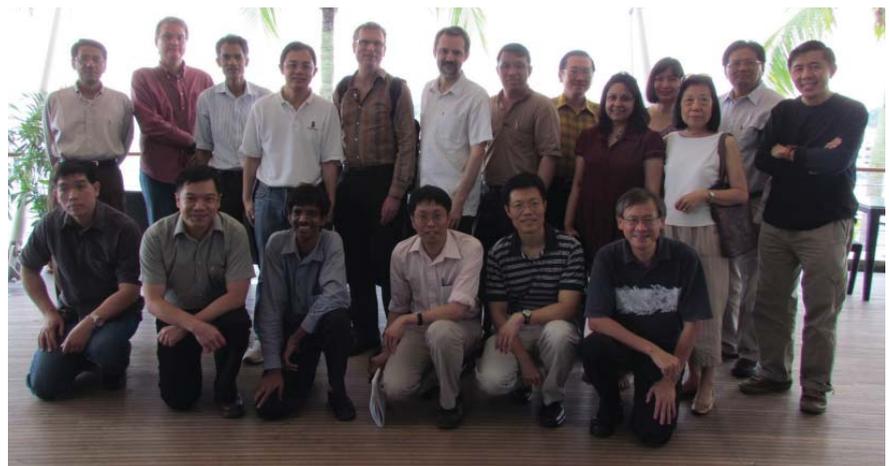
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University Awards 2011 – Induction of new NUS Teaching Academy Fellows.



Fellows at the First NUS Teaching Academy Retreat held on 14 May 2011 at the Republic of Singapore Yacht Club.

editorial information

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CONGRATULATIONS

We wish to congratulate Prof Philip Holden on his recent promotion to full Professor (from 1 July 2011)



Professor Tan Eng Chye
*Deputy President (Academic Affairs)
and Provost*

In August 2011, University Town will open its doors to welcome 1,200 undergraduates to its 2 residential colleges, and 1,700 postgraduate students to its Graduate Residence. In 2013, 2 more colleges will be added to house more students. 2013 will be an exciting year for NUS for another reason – the NUS-Yale College will be ready for its first intake of students – also a first for Singapore.

Since its inauguration in 2009, the NUS Teaching Academy has embarked on a number of projects, e.g., reviewing NUS' teaching evaluation systems of peer review and student feedback, encouraging collegial and student engagement in pedagogical activities via the Academy's Teaching and Learning Club and launching JNUSTA, the Journal of the

NUS Teaching Academy, aimed at showcasing pedagogical initiatives within NUS and the Singapore tertiary education landscape and encouraging collaborations between disciplines. In late 2010, the Academy began a project to examine how new developments in information technology can improve teaching and learning in NUS. I understand that the Teaching Academy has just held a retreat to craft its strategic direction for the next three years, and will focus on re-thinking through what our transforming education landscape means for all of us. Any radical shifts in institutional terrain and practices will bring with them hope, excitement and challenges. Even as we live through these evolutions, our critical reflection, at periodic intervals, on the impact of these changes on our lives as educators and scholars, and the way these will shape our students' NUS experience, will be timely. This is an important issue that will occupy us in the years ahead, and the Fellows of the Academy will devote their energy in leading this reflection, even as they continue to work on individual projects and extend their outreach activities.

We can therefore expect the next three years ahead to be life-changing and exciting years in education at NUS.

I look forward to frank engagement and constructive dialogue among all stakeholders at NUS. I prevail on all colleagues to join in this important conversation as we move along in forging a new education landscape and to give our support to the Academy as the Fellows lend their voice and help to provide direction for the discussions in education. I wish the Academy a good year ahead.

Members of the 3rd Executive Council share their thoughts on being part of the Academy for the past 2 years and their wish for the Academy...



Vice Chair, A/P Victor Tan

Teaching Academy (TA) is two years old! I am happy and honoured to have the opportunity to serve on the TA executive council, as well as being involved in several projects initiated by the TA. I have learned and reflected a lot on teaching matters through interacting with many excellent educators in the TA.

We have been telling people that TA is not CDTL. However, I feel that it is not necessary to try too hard to distinguish the two. After all, to the teaching community, the main goal of both units are to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in NUS. In fact, in the past two years, the two units have been working closely, and supporting each other in many ways. What I hope to see is that the two units can further consolidate effort to reach out to a wider group of faculty members in NUS.

I am absolutely delighted being part of this journey towards excellence in education at NUS. The Teaching Academy (TA) has a clear role to play in driving innovation in teaching and learning, and in cementing the strengths NUS has in this area as well as working on some of areas we could and should do better. I am happy about the contributions the TA, and especially its sub-committees, have already made and I look forward to much more to come!



A/P Jochen Wirtz



This is a very exciting time. As part of the university's commitment to strengthen its position as a premier institution of higher learning, I hope that the Teaching Academy will continue working to address the many challenges involved in providing high-quality teaching. At the same time I look forward to continue learning from the innovative solutions that our colleagues in the different schools, faculties and departments have developed to address these challenges. My main hope for the TA is that it will become a true platform for both faculty and students to make their voices heard, so that the TA will be able to make a real difference to the quality of both teaching and learning at NUS.

Dr Johan Geertsema

It has been exciting serving on the executive council of the Teaching Academy. It has given me a chance to contribute to the enhancement of teaching standards in our university. Certainly, the Academy will play an important role from now on in steering the course of our teaching excellence.



Professor Seah Kar Heng

CURRENT FELLOWS

Executive Council

A/P Erle **Lim** (Chair)

A/P Victor **Tan** (Vice Chair)

Dr Johan **Geertsema**

Prof **Seah** Kar Heng

A/P Jochen **Wirtz**

A/P **Chng** Huang Hoon (Ex Officio Member)

Prof **Tan** Thiam Soon (Ex Officio Member)

Fellows

A/P Sunita Anne **Abraham**

A/P **Ashwin** M Khambadkone

A/P Helmer **Aslaksen**

A/P **Chan** Aik Hui, Phil

A/P **Chan** Wai Meng

Mr **Cheah** Kok Ming

A/P Alice **Christudason**

A/P Teofilo C **Daquila**

Prof **Farooq** Shamsuzzaman

A/P **Goh** Say Song

Prof **Gwee** Choon Eng, Matthew

Prof Philip Joseph **Holden**

Prof Andy **Hor**

Prof **Ip** Yuen Kwong, Alex

Prof **Koh** Khee Meng

Prof **Kulwant** Singh

A/P **Lakshminarayanan** Samavedham

A/P **Lee** Tye Beng, Joel

A/P Cecilia **Lim**

A/P **Lim** Lum Peng

A/P **Narayanan** Ganapathy

A/P Daphne **Pan**

A/P **Rajendran** Kanagasuntheram

A/P **Sow** Chorng Haur

Prof Bernard **Tan**

A/P **Tan** Kay Chen

A/P Kenneth Paul **Tan**

A/P **Yap** Von Bing

Prof **Zhou** Weibiao

NEW FELLOWS SPEAK...

My Approach to Student Engagement

"You get what you get. On the first day you go into the class and there they are; it's up to you to teach them."

Teaching Law to non-Law students poses a unique set of challenges and I can relate to the quote above. One of the difficulties is that the students are not 'pure' law students; the Law Modules which students undertake within the Department of Real Estate may be just one of several (non-Law) Modules in the semester, while students who choose my non-restricted Elective may arrive from widely different heterogeneous backgrounds. The latter include the Humanities, 'hard' Sciences, Combined Sciences or Business.

Another issue is that such students are not being prepared for the legal profession. Rather, students within the Department graduate to proceed to careers in diverse sectors of the real estate industry, such as valuation, real estate development, property and lease management, property research and consultancy and real estate brokerage. On the other hand, the objective for students from other Faculties who choose my Elective Module is to provide a flavour of Real Estate law in Singapore's context. In light of these, the link between often abstract concepts in real estate law and the "real" world are not easily evident. It is therefore critical that I find ways to make students' learning more meaningful and valuable.

To this end, I have found it particularly useful to gain an understanding of students' learning styles. Paying attention to an individual student's style of learning can result in improved attitudes toward learning and an increase in thinking skills, academic achievement and creativity. In addition, research shows a positive correlation between specific student cognitive styles and a wide repertoire of instructional models devised by the teacher. I therefore adopt a variety of instructional modes; these appeal to a broader spectrum of students and result in a greater level of engagement. Such modes include the use of buzz groups, debates, case-study analysis and role-play. These offer students diverse opportunities to experience reactions to complex and 'real' problems in a reasonably 'safe' and unconstrained context, while perhaps being evaluated by another group and/or me.

These methods also focus more on the process than the solution, and enable the reaping of the more generic benefits of group dynamics, including collaborative and peer learning. The result is an enhanced and more enjoyable learning experience which students are unlikely to forget.

1. Davis, James R. (1997). Better Teaching, More Learning. American Council on Education/Oryx Press Series on Higher Education. p. 61.

The newly inducted Fellows share their thoughts on how they can play a role in enhancing teaching and learning in NUS.



A/P Alice Christudason
Dept of Real Estate

Be The Currency From Which Change Comes...



A/P Joel Lee
Faculty of Law

A lady wanted Gandhi to tell her son to stop eating sugar. Gandhi said to bring the child back the next week.

The next week she brought the child and Gandhi said "Stop eating sugar child". And the child did.

The lady came back a month later and asked "My child has done what you asked, but why could you not have spoken to him the first time I came?"

Gandhi replied "Madam, a week earlier, I was still eating sugar".

As I drove around the Bukit Timah Campus ring road, the words on the banner fluttering in the wind caught my eye. "Be The Change" has been the tagline for the NUS Open House the last couple of years. A truncated version of Gandhi's "Be the change you want to see in the world", it is both pithy and poignant.

This led me to thinking (for an academic, a dangerous endeavor, to be sure). As teachers, are we empowering our students to "be the change"? What does this even mean?

At the most basic level, doing so will certainly require equipping them with both knowledge and skill. And this is part of what Universities do. It is undeniable that we engage in content education. Perhaps less explicit but no less deniable is that students are expected to develop skills, whether cognitive or behavioural.

And many might say that this is enough. To my mind, it is not. Knowledge and skill gives students the means for change. It does not give them the motivation or the wisdom to facilitate change.

Is it our concern whether students have the motivation and wisdom to facilitate change? I believe so. Whether we know it or like it, students will model us unconsciously. They will not only take in what we say but how we say it. They will even notice the things we don't say and how we interact with the world around us. Put simply, we should care because to do otherwise would be to abdicate our responsibility as teachers and role models.

How then should we give students motivation and wisdom? This is admittedly a tall order. Part of it involves sharing with students the values that motivate us, our mission, our experiences and even our mistakes. And we need to be sincere and congruent. If I impress upon my students to resolve conflicts amicably, I need to embody that in my interactions with them and others. Like the story about Gandhi, we need to walk our talk. Any incongruence will muddy the message or worse, cancel it out completely.

However, if we do this well, we will not only enable our students to "be the change" but, with some luck, take it one step further and to "be the currency from which change comes".

Setting a Good Exam Paper

I recall an incident that happened about 22 years ago. On one afternoon after the final exams, a student came to visit me. Naturally, I asked him about his performance in the exams.

"All fine except one."

"Which paper?"

"xxxxx Theory!"

"What? I don't believe it." Earlier, I had learned from his peers that he was the best problem solver and also their 'course advisor' on this subject.

"Yes, but Sir you see, most of the problems in that paper were either from tutorials or about proofs of theorems from lecture notes. It is not that I didn't do well, but I am very disappointed to see a paper of this type appearing in our university exam."

Prof Koh Khee Meng
Dept of Mathematics



This student is now a professor in our university.

To me as a teacher, the exam is an important component of assessing students. When I was a student myself, I enjoyed the exam if it was a reasonable paper. And so, since I became a university lecturer, I have been paying a great deal of attention on exam paper setting and I always ask myself: What do I mean by a good exam paper?

To answer this question meaningfully each time, of course, I have to identify first what the objectives of exams are. For mathematics, I think it is quite clear that we wish to assess the students on their abilities in the following aspects:

- (1) Understanding of the basic concepts, principles and results;
- (2) Applications of what they have learnt; and
- (3) Analytic and problem-solving skills.

Thus, in line with these, in my opinion, an exam paper is considered as 'good' if it is set in such a way that we could distinguish students' different levels of attainment of the above-mentioned abilities and classify them accordingly into different classes.

Papers, of the type as mentioned at the beginning, that rely almost solely on memory should not be encouraged. In fact, a well-designed course is expected to achieve a variety of desired learning outcomes and its final exam should appropriately evaluate students' accomplishment of these learning outcomes.

On the other hand, throughout all my years of considered effort and hard work, I recognize that setting a good exam paper is not only challenging, it is indeed an art. I am constantly on the lookout for good prototypes for non-routine exam questions. These may come from new textbooks, my own research, journal papers, or discussions with colleagues and students. Then, to get the right balance of difficulty and novelty in adapting/creating a non-routine problem and yet discern that the time allocated for solving it in an exam is adequate is a challenging and pleasurable effort towards setting one exam question.

I have to decide on the number of such non-routine questions to assess (3) and maybe (2), and add suitable 'standard' questions to ascertain (1) and (2). Like a piece of art laboured on with much effort, love and creativity, the exam paper is now ready.

Promoting Student Centricity and Engagement



A/P Teofilo C Daquila
Dept of Southeast Asian Studies

In my many years of teaching, my philosophy is that as an educator, I should contribute to the teaching and learning profession in the best possible way. I have been guided with the following goals: to become an excellent, effective and engaging teacher, and to contribute to the development of the workplace and lifelong skills of my students including critical thinking, creativity, independent learning, effective communication and interpersonal skills, rigorous inquiry, and the use of evidence and arguments. My students are my priority and I intend to provide them with an effective teaching and learning environment not only during their time of study but more importantly for the rest of their lives. In his foreword to “Reflections on Teaching: The NUS Experience”, published by the NUS Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning in 2000, former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lim Pin said, “Education, like the other caring professions, must be people-centred. Our students are our priority, and their learning and ability to continue is our responsibility.”

In designing and organising my courses across different levels, I have taken into account the goals of the department, faculty and university, and career prospects of my students by providing them with a broader knowledge and inquiry of the various concepts and issues relevant to each course. I have also considered the diversity of the students’ backgrounds, experiences, and nationalities, given the multi-disciplinary nature of the Southeast Asian Studies Department. With a diverse environment, I have adopted different approaches and strategies that have enabled me to effectively engage my students, connect with them, and connect each other.

To a large extent, I have accomplished my goals by using the following approaches and strategies.

First, I have followed a three-stage approach that introduces the key questions to be discussed and that has provided students with a clearer understanding of the various concepts and theories, and their real-life applications. This approach has been received favourably by my students. It is important to provide them with a stronger foundation to facilitate transition to and understanding of the other parts of the course, as well as in the various issues affecting their lives, career and day-to-day activities.

Second, I have used an interdisciplinary approach that has provided students with a more holistic method of studying and learning about the various economic problems and phenomena in Southeast Asia by considering the economic, historical, social and political dimensions in the analysis.

Third, for group discussions, I have used case studies based on relevant readings sorted and categorised into common themes, and seminars based on pre-assigned journal articles.

Fourth, I have employed graphs and statistics to clearly illustrate the relationships among different variables.

Fifth, I have used the IVLE and its tools, as well as other multimedia facilities such as videos and internet that have significantly facilitated the teaching and learning process.

Sixth, I have followed a personalised and interactive approach that has provided a conducive environment for a more effective teaching and learning process.

Finally, I have participated and/or presented papers in workshops and conferences related to teaching and learning organised within the university by the CDTL and the FASS, and those organised by overseas associations including the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL).

Seeding Resilience Thinking

One cannot even begin to develop an educational system unless one has in mind the knowledge and skills that one values and the kind of individuals one hopes will emerge at the end of the day.

Howard Gardner

Mr Cheah Kok Ming
Dept of Architecture



The agenda of adaptations and resilience to climate change, peak oil aftermath, growing cities and their demand for resources have recently been at the forefront of research and action plans of many agencies and institutions. The imperatives are the development of measures and paradigms beyond mere sustaining or accommodating changes but also to enable developments that are better synergised with natural systems; to also absorb shocks with contingency facilities and to return to their operational and physical status with little hindrance. For example, we will be speculating on the diversification of food production with resource farming to better cope with land fertility regeneration and adversity of climate fluctuations; at the same time, enhancing the local ecological cycle. In the context of built environment, buildings and cities will be designed with better integration with natural systems, reduced carbon dependency, systems diversity and flexibility, durability, local self-sufficiency, system feed-back sensitivity and fostering a stronger sense community. There is no doubt that for any development to be resilient, it will involve the concurrent inputs and integration of other technologies, sciences, social and economic knowledge domains. Resilient thinking in the design process is not just a critical skill set but also requires a value system. It involves an ethical cognition for making responsible decision and action beyond self-interest.

Resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and structure.

Brian Walker & David Salt

For resilient thinking to be part of design education, there is a need to consolidate it with a few fundamental mind frames and learning cultures. Developing resilient thinking skill would require the interaction of 4 inter-related pedagogical components:

Developing Ecological Literacy:

This is a term coined by David Orr and Fritjof Capra to describe the ability to understand the principles of organization and functions of ecological systems. It enables one to gain a conceptual framework that human presence is interdependent and interrelated to our natural environment. Ecology is both a literal and metaphorical framework of shaping our decisions and actions in creating sustainable social-ecological system. It involves systems thinking and recognizes the planet as an integrated whole rather than a collection of individual elements. It is about learning from and working with the natural system.

Cultivating Interdisciplinary Approach:

Understanding the broad and complex nature of environmental issues require the knowledge contributions from various disciplines. Conceptually it enables the students to have holistic and critical insights of the problem, leading them to better understand the interdependency and connectivity of the various issues. The challenge to interdisciplinary learning and teaching is often the construction of an integrative knowledge, departing from the mere juxtaposition of various knowledge domains into a single module.

Designing Integrated Solution:

This is a progression from interdisciplinary learning culture. An integrated solution is the outcome of a collaborative design process that premises on a holistic underpinning. The method stresses on the participation of multi-disciplinary stakeholders at the beginning of the strategic planning or problem solving process. The process defines clearer goals and creates better model of interdependent working systems, eliminating redundancy, improving efficiency, flexibility, adaptability and multi-functional attributes. It will also enable a stronger symbiotic interfacing with the natural system. These are salient qualities of resilience.

Fostering Ethical Perspective:

Developmental challenges or policy making often have to weigh economic gains against social and environmental issues. Howard Gardner wrote in the “Ethical Mind” about an “ethical cast of mind” of not just living up to values but also to help and empower others do the same. Ethical conception enables one to define ones responsibilities and responses beyond oneself to focus on the larger communal entity. It is about a mindset that guides decision and action in the interest of a collective future.

These mindsets and values are prudent for formulating a meaningful approach towards learning of instrumental knowledge. The efforts to define a design curriculum with strategic framework of inculcating resilient thinking continue to be daunting. The incremental cut and paste way of updating “business as usual” mode of knowledge or simply lumping different knowledge together as an interdisciplinary subject without connecting or framing them with a strong narrative are certainly not ideal method.

I see the NUSTA as a think tank for exploring and expanding these ideas and values, most critically as a collaborative platform to establish concrete directions for higher standards of teaching.

Towards Teaching Excellence at NUS



Prof Zhou Weibiao
Dept of Chemistry

The mission and vision of the Academy point to the importance of building and improving a culture of strong teaching commitment and teaching excellence in the NUS community. Having such a culture is both critical and challenging for a world class and research intensive university such as NUS. It is a great honour for being a member of the NUS Teaching Academy and making a contribution towards its mission.

Philosophy of Education

Education should emphasise the interaction between ideas and reality. To be helpful in novel situations, the ideas must be abstract to some extent. The challenge for the teacher is to communicate the worthwhile ideas, with illuminating positive and negative examples. Then the student has a chance to construct and own some useful knowledge, and perhaps to create new knowledge.



A/P Yap Von Bing
*Dept of Statistics and
Applied Probability*

You are invited to:

THE ACADEMY Masterclass SPEAKER SERIES

PUBLIC LECTURE



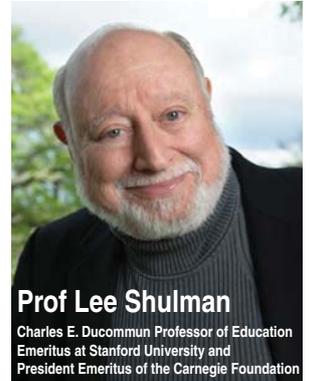
The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

TUESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2011

10.00 AM to 12.00 PM

UNIVERSITY HALL AUDITORIUM, LEVEL 2, LEE KONG CHIAN WING

For more information and registration, visit <http://www.nus.edu.sg/teachingacademy/masterclass/>



Prof Lee Shulman

Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education
Emeritus at Stanford University and
President Emeritus of the Carnegie Foundation

SYNOPSIS

One of the most important developments in higher education worldwide has been the growing commitment of university faculty across the disciplines and professions to take teaching and learning more seriously as areas of serious scholarship. Rather than viewing research and teaching as competing poles in continuing competition for the attention and energy of university faculty members, we have come to see them as complementary. Beyond the longstanding notion that the most outstanding scholars often become the most accomplished teachers because they are on the leading edge of inquiry in their fields, has been the recognition that university professors have an obligation to direct their substantial talents as investigators toward asking fundamental questions about how knowledge and skill can best develop in the minds and hearts of their own students.

What does it mean to learn to think like a historian, a biologist, a physician or a business leader? How do we marshal our best understandings of how human beings learn and develop and combine those understandings with our grasp of the most critical features of our academic fields that should be taught and learned?

Prof Shulman will provide an overview of the new fields of scholarship of teaching and learning in academic and professional fields of study, illustrating his account with examples from physics and history, literature and mathematics, medicine & business.

He will discuss how empirical research methods are brought to bear on such questions, a topic that will be further developed in his masterclass workshop, which will emphasize the challenges of assessment and accountability.

BIOGRAPHY

Lee Shulman received the BA, MA and PhD from the University of Chicago. He served as a professor of educational psychology and medical education at Michigan State University from 1963 to 1982, where he founded and co-directed the Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT) and co-directed a 10-year program of research on medical thinking and decision making that led to publication of the classic *Medical Problem Solving* (Elstein, Shulman and Sprafka, 1978) by the Harvard University Press. In 1982, Prof Shulman moved to Stanford University's School of Education, where he was the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education and Professor (by courtesy) of Psychology. In 1997, he was appointed President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and served as its eighth president until 2008.

Currently he holds the position of the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Emeritus at Stanford University and President Emeritus of the Carnegie Foundation. Prof Shulman holds all his academic degrees from the University of Chicago. He is a past president of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and received its career award for Distinguished Contributions to Educational Research. He is also a past president of the National Academy of Education. He is the recipient of the American Psychological Association's 1995 E.L. Thorndike Award for Distinguished

Psychological Contributions to Education, a fellow of both the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a Guggenheim Fellow, and a Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. He has been awarded 17 honorary doctoral degrees.

Prof Shulman's research investigates teaching and teacher education at all levels from the elementary school to the PhD, medical education, assessment, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and signature pedagogies in the professions. Among other works, his publications include the following books: *Medical Problem Solving* (1978), *The Wisdom of Practice: Essays on Teaching, Learning and Learning to Teach* (2004), *Teaching as Community Property: Essays on Higher Education* (2004) and *Paradigms and Programs for Research on Teaching* (1990).

His Stanford University research team developed the portfolio-based performance assessment prototypes for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards between 1985 and 1990. Shulman received the 2006 Grawemeyer Award in Education for his book *The Wisdom of Practice*.



Look out for the Masterclass workshop — **The Challenges of Assessment and The Three Apprenticeships of Education**

Prof. Shulman will present and discuss the challenges of assessment and accountability in higher education in this masterclass workshop. Thursday, 15 September 2011 | 2 pm - 4 pm

For more information and registration, visit <http://www.nus.edu.sg/teachingacademy/masterclass/>

REACHING OUT TO THE NUS COMMUNITY

ACADEMY CHAT: IN CONVERSATION WITH A/P LAKSHMINARAYANAN SAMAVEDHAM (6 JAN 2011)

(FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME-TEACHING)

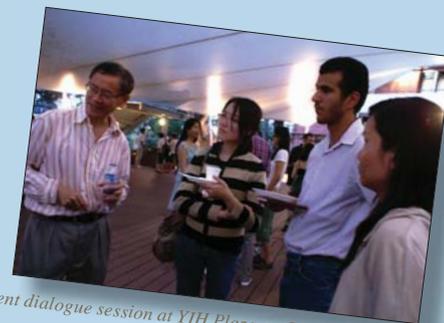
The Academy Chat series is a joint effort of CDTL and the Teaching Academy to reach out to new faculty members at NUS. Usually, the Academy Chat is embedded as a 1-hour session in the Professional Development Program-Teaching (PDP-T) conducted by CDTL at the beginning of each semester. On 6 January 2011, I had the opportunity of interacting with new NUS colleagues on this platform. After I provided a short presentation of the ideas behind the formation of the Teaching Academy and the projects being pursued by its Fellows, there was a brisk question and answer session.

The discussion ranged from what NUS was doing for the continuous professional development of faculty members, to our P&T policies and also about the challenges of balancing teaching, research and service. Some of the questions were very sharp and I found it exciting to articulate thoughtful responses to them. Overall, the chat session was a good chance for me to: (i) know the concerns that nascent faculty members at NUS have, (ii) share the institutional challenges we face and (iii) point out some of the pathways available for personal and professional growth at NUS – **A/P Lakshminarayanan Samavedham**

TEACHING AND LEARNING CLUB



TLC student dialogue session at Alumni House on 17 Feb 2011.



TLC student dialogue session at YIH Plaza on 5 May 2010.



TLC student dialogue session at NUSSU Students' Lounge, YIH on 1 Oct 2010.



This series of case studies aims to provide concrete accounts of how different NUS academics have encountered and overcome challenges in the course of their careers, and how they have dealt with the mistakes that they have made. What decisions and actions did they take when confronted with difficult situations and dilemmas? What opportunities were they able to seize? How aware were they of their strengths and weaknesses? Would they have done things differently with the benefit of hindsight? These case studies do not, of course, aim to provide the only right answers to questions and dilemmas that typically confront the NUS academic. What they do is to give examples of how various academics at NUS have navigated their careers through often difficult situations. Their aim is to provoke new academics to reflect on their own values, where they would like to go, and how to get there; and more experienced academics to reflect on where they have been, where they should be going next, and how they can be of service to their less experienced colleagues.

A 3-member sub-committee comprising A/P Kenneth Paul Tan, A/P Daphne Pan and A/P Lakshminarayanan Samavedham completed two case studies in January 2011, showcasing two senior NUS academicians — Prof Andy Hor and Prof Bernard Tan. The series is called the Academic Journeys.

Case Studies

Osmosis and Balance in the Professorial Vocation: A Profile of Professor Andy Hor

Academic Journeys, no. 1, January 2011

Available at: <http://www.nus.edu.sg/teachingacademy/acadjourneys/AcadJourney-1-AndyHor.pdf>

Taking Risks Along The Way: A Profile of Professor Bernard Tan

Academic Journeys, no. 2, January 2011

Available at: <http://www.nus.edu.sg/teachingacademy/acadjourneys/AcadJourney-2-BernardTan.pdf>

Sub-committee members

A/P Kenneth Paul Tan

(Jan 2010-present)

A/P Lakshminarayanan Samavedham

(Jan 2010-present)

A/P Chng Huang Hoon

(Jan 2010-Nov 2010)

A/P Daphne Pan

(Sep 2010-present)

PEER REVIEW



Peer Review sub-committee members lending their support at the workshop titled 'Are You Ready to be Peer Reviewed?: Preparing for the "Classroom Observation" component' conducted by CDTL on 7 April 2011.

Several projects undertaken by the NUS TA include:

- Student Feedback
- Peer Review of Teaching
- Academic Journeys - Case Studies
- Teaching & Learning Club (TLC)
- Journal of the NUS Teaching Academy (JNUSTA)
- IT in Education

If you have any feedback or would like to participate in any of the projects, please contact cdtvs@nus.edu.sg or cdtybc@nus.edu.sg

- 2) The external community, such as with the TAs of leading universities worldwide.

Various ways were suggested to accomplish these aims:

- 1) Attend Faculty/School meetings and solicit feedback about peer review and student feedback.
- 2) Organise Faculty/School-based teaching and learning workshops.
- 3) Organise workshops for graduate tutors who come from around the region and are from diverse educational systems.
- 4) Feature prominent NUS colleagues, who are non-Fellows but who excel at teaching, in Academic Journeys.
- 5) Invite prominent NUS colleagues to speak on the Masterclass Series platform.
- 6) Collaborate with the external community.

Adding Value to the NUS Community

Revamping Postgraduate Education in NUS

- 1) It was felt that NUS emphasises, and is better known for, undergraduate (rather than postgraduate) education. As such, the TA feels that it is important to address this and to engage with graduate students to discover what they seek in a postgraduate education.
- 2) Imbue in our undergraduates the right skills and attitudes even before they embark on a postgraduate degree.
- 3) Find out the reason why some choose not to pursue postgraduate education in NUS.
- 4) Re-examine the supervision of graduate/postgraduate students.

NUS Branding

The need to correctly brand NUS. For this initiative to be successful, it is important that we get buy-in from all interested stakeholders – faculties, staff, students, alumni and others.

Other Issues

1. *Student-initiated Modules*: It was thought that it might be useful for the TA to conduct a study looking at the current state of student-initiated modules (such as ISMs and UROPS) at NUS and, from this, to propose new directions.
2. *General Education Modules (GEMs)*: As NUS is presently rethinking the philosophy, purpose and content of its General Education programme, one project that the TA can undertake will be a research project into the philosophy of general education, perhaps comparing the different approaches by other universities and also looking at the past decade or so of GEMs at NUS.
3. *U-Town*: As U-Town is just starting up, it offers the possibility of setting up a longitudinal study in which the TA could try, by comparing the experiences and results of U-Town residents versus control groups (students in halls of residence or the general student population), to determine the difference that the U-Town experience makes for the students. A good initial activity, to make connection with U-Town, might be to have a Teaching and Learning Club meeting with the Tembusu College faculty.

In the next year, and after that, we will maintain focus and continuity of purpose to follow-up on these issues. We must ask ourselves this question: How can the TA shape the educational landscape in NUS and beyond? The challenge for us is to make this group's ideas into actionable plans, set appropriate timeframes and follow through with them.