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but Mr. Hong told him that if he wanted to become an official teacher, he first needed to have 5 years of experience in teaching assistance. Besides, he needed to pass the accreditation of the Ministry of Education, which only admitted those who had college degrees and above. It was impossible for the Ministry to admit those who only had a high school diploma.

In addition, schools in Taiwan had begun to reduce abacus arithmetic and replace them with computer courses. Many schools also stopped hiring abacus arithmetic teachers altogether. Tai then thought that if he could be admitted into the Changhua Normal Institute of Education, he could become an abacus arithmetic teacher. Therefore, Tai started to prepare for the entry exam and kept practicing abacus and mental arithmetic for two hours every day. A year later, although he had not been admitted to the National Changhua University of Education, he returned to the I-Ning High School to take the abacus arithmetic exam and successfully qualified for level 5, which surprised his teacher Hong You-tian.

When Tai Chiang Ching first joined the abacus arithmetic contest team, Mr. Hong had asked team members to write down their “targets” of the level they wanted to reach when they graduated three years later. At that time, Tai wrote down “level 5,” which showed that, even after graduating, Tai hadn’t forgotten the “target” he had set earlier.

Origin of Abacus Arithmetic

Speaking of abacus arithmetic, those who were born in the 1960s and 1970s should still remember it, because it was included in their elementary school curriculum. They might still remember using their little fingers to move the beads, while memorising the formulae, “5 on the upper deck and 4 on the lower deck,” “remove the 5 and adding 1 to the left,” etc. Some children might be clever enough to take to the abacus and to calculate the numbers mentally but some might not.

Actually, abacus is a traditional Chinese calculating tool with a long history. According to Japanese documents, from about 3000 to 40000 BC in Mesopotamia in the Mediterranean Sea, there was a kind of abacus called a “Dust Abacus.” As implied by the name, the abacus was made from a wooden board covered with dust. A table of successive columns shown on top was delimited as tenths and hundreds with lines or marks to indicate the numbers. Later, the dust on the abacus was replaced with gravel, which was then developed into a “Cine Abacus” with the function of “digits.” In the Roman period, a “Grooved Abacus” made of bronze or metal material with a more precise structure was developed. Vertical lines were carved on the abacus; lines at the top had one bead each representing a value of five while lines on the bottom had four beads each, each representing a value of one. However, western abacuses all disappeared as time went by, so only traditional Chinese abacuses still exist today.

Now, the influence of Chinese abacus arithmetic has expanded all over the world as a result of the promotion of many people, including Tai Chiang Ching. Based on the history of Chinese abacus development, the Chinese abacus has existed for about 3000 years since the earliest clay abacus was discovered in the Zhou dynasty. According to the 13 tools recorded in the ancient book, “Records of Calculation Skill”, there were already various calculating tools in ancient China, showing traditional Chinese people’s wisdom. During Spring and Autumn, the Chinese were already using a “Bamboo Tally” for calculation. In the Southern Song dynasty (1274 AD), the “Abacus Arithmetic Formulae Verse” was created, and the term “Abacus Arithmetic” also appeared in the book “Classic of Calculation.” The abacus had become a common calculating tool for ordinary people in their everyday lives until the Ming dynasty.

Chinese abacus use spread to Korea, Japan, the U.S., Taiwan, and Southeast Asia, and became an important calculating tool until it was replaced with the electronic calculator in the 1990s.

However, scientific research has shown that the abacus is not only a calculating tool, but that it also has a certain effect on the development of mental potential. Therefore, believing that “Abacus

arithmetic shouldn't be discarded as it is a valuable treasure", Tai Chiang Ching has continued to create innovative teaching methods ever since he established his career in abacus and mental arithmetic teaching nearly 30 years ago. He also actively promoted and carried forward the education of abacus mental arithmetic while collaborating with other appropriate teaching materials.

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