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Part 4: Transfer

Abacus mental arithmetic industry encountered bottleneck

Every enterprise has its ups and downs i.e. growth period, peak period to declining period. The most important point is that it becomes innovative to find an opportunity for transformation while encountering crisis.

Number of students decreased

During the 1990s, the abacus was gradually being replaced by the electronic calculator and computer that became increasingly widespread and popular. The abacus arithmetic lesson was removed from the elementary and junior high school curriculum. Besides, the birth rate in Taiwan had been decreasing in recent decades. Therefore, all kinds of cultural institutes started to decline, including abacus mental arithmetic institutes.

Tai Chiang Ching's CMA registered as many as 1200 students between the peak period of 1988 to 1993. However, because of lower birthrate and rise of the electronic calculator, CMA gradually closed all of its branches and only operated in the form of franchising system. Staff in the CMA headquarters also had been trimmed to 200 people. During the booming years, there were numerous students registered for Children's Abacus Association. For example, there were as many as 11,000 people registered in Tainan area in 2002. However, there were only 5000 people registered in 2009, showing fewer people wanted to learn abacus mental arithmetic.

At that time, CMA had four branches and 10 cooperative tuition centres. When CMA was affected by the economic crisis, the number of students decreased significantly and many branches couldn't survive. Some other abacus mental arithmetic institutes were closing or encountered difficulties in continued operation. Besides, some other abacus mental arithmetic institutes decided to try to invest in other countries, such as America, Southeast Asia,

China, etc. However, maybe they had applied inappropriate methods or it wasn't a good time, most of them didn't succeed and retreat in five years.

Tai Chiang Ching didn't give up promoting abacus mental arithmetic. He continued to promote abacus mental arithmetic in Taiwan. He believed "learning abacus mental arithmetic can stimulate the brain, memory and concentration." This kind of function couldn't be replaced by any computer or electronic calculator. Nevertheless, modern people were attracted to the convenience that high technology provided, so they didn't understand the true essence of abacus mental arithmetic. Thus, Tai hoped more people would find out the advantage of abacus mental arithmetic.

Anyway, Tai Chiang Ching did not give up enlightening children's potential to innovate and continues to engage in teaching abacus mental arithmetic in Taiwan. Notwithstanding, there were already more than 3000 tuition centres teaching abacus mental arithmetic and more than 10,000 abacus mental arithmetic teachers, This showed that this industry was already rather saturated. In order to prepare for a transformation, Tai started to attend classes about potential development, psychology, business management, etc. Although the recession hit the cultural education industry, Tai knew he would find a solution to overcome the difficulties. On the contrary, Tai's wife Hsu Hsiu-yun was very worried about the future of the abacus mental arithmetic industry, because she heard many negative comments about the economy from friends and saw the number of students dropping significantly.

However, Tai determinedly told Hsu, "Every industry or profession has its ups and downs. This is a natural and normal phenomenon. The most important thing is to be confident and prepare for innovation and change. Isn't this the time to test our ability to deal with a contingency and pressure?"

On the other hand, Tai didn't want to be affected by the weak economy. He seriously thought about how to overcome the limits of location and expand his enterprise overseas.

