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Tai Chiang Ching had a different way of thinking and reacting that was different from the traditional, especially when he faced differing opinions, he wouldn't be modest with his goals. He has been motivated by his grandfather's words, "practicing abacus is better than farming," since he was a child, and then again was moved by Zhu's words, "the field of abacus mental arithmetic has no boundary." They all coalesced into an important turning point of his life. Of course, Tai also has the perseverance and determination to "try hard to become the number one in the world" and "never give up." Tai inherited such characteristics of strength and perseverance from the study of abacus mental arithmetic.

After Tai studied the abacus mental arithmetic research conducted by international experts and scholars, he found out something very interesting. Abacus mental arithmetic had been considered as a basic skill for training accountants and related employees. Gradually it became a method to stimulate children's development of intelligence and mentality. Even in Japan, it became a secret of training mentality and maintaining memory for elders. Therefore, there is still a lot of potential for abacus mental arithmetic in applying to education and life-long development. We can say that the abacus mental arithmetic has a limitless future.

### Abacus mental arithmetic in Japan

In 1982, there were 7 million people in Japan learning abacus arithmetic. According to the report published on newspaper, "Sankei Shimbun" in Japan, learning abacus mental arithmetic became very popular among Japanese elders. The "Elder's Workshop in Abacus Arithmetic" was held each week at a community centre in Nasuno Town, Tochigi County.

An elder, Inoue, often attended the workshop and told the reporter, although he learned abacus arithmetic when he was a child, he had already forgotten all of it since he had not been using it for long time. After attending the workshop for one year, he already passed level 4 exam. Besides, since he started to learn abacus arithmetic again, he felt he his life had become reenergised. He also

had more chances to leverage his mental potential and achieve greater clarity in daily life.

Shintani Mutsuo opened an abacus mental arithmetic class in Hyogo Prefecture, West City, Japan. He went to a senior citizens home every week to teach elders abacus arithmetic. The average age of the elders were over 79. Shintani believed that learning abacus not only prevent Alzheimer's disease, but was also helpful in improving memory, in addition to increasing the stimulation in their lives.

In 1989, Japanese scholar Toshio Hayashi conducted a survey titled "Senior's health and abacus arithmetic learning experience," aiming to compare the health conditions among those seniors who had learnt abacus arithmetic and those who had not. Survey showed the seniors who had learned abacus arithmetic were better and they were more confident about their health, especially during old age. Toshio Hayashi's study showed that learning of abacus arithmetic not only enhances the development of the right side of the brain, but also slows down the aging process. Thus learning of abacus arithmetic is beneficial to human's longevity. He believes the brain is stimulat through the movement of fingers on the abacus, thus slowing down the deterioration that comes with aging.

With the widespread use of electronic calculators and computers, learning of abacus mental arithmetic surely has been negatively affected. However, as a skill, abacus mental arithmetic provides a variety of educational functions such as enlightening mentality and empowering potential. In spite of this, its historical significance is undeniable. No matter how much technology has evolved and traditional tools are replaced with new ones, abacus mental arithmetic has the function of focusing on the balance of hands and the mind. As long as "human beings" are not replaced by "machines," and continue to utilise the brain and both of their hands, the abacus mental arithmetic will be able to co-exist alongside computers. Thus the abacus mental arithmetic won't be replaced by other tools.

Sources:

Liu Shantang's column: "Two-handed Abacus Manipulation towards children's potential intelligence development"; "Zi Jin: "Elders are crazy about abacus arithmetic in Japan"; You Ming Publishing Company: "Let's talk about the advantages of abacus mental arithmetic".