

Reflections of a 2nd Career Entrant

Introduction

Reporting for work at 7 am, printing worksheets for students, preparing materials for lessons, attendance marking, department meetings, Staff Contact Time, accompanying students to competitions, marking assignments, tests and exam papers. These tasks are part and parcel of a teacher's job. Undoubtedly, they can collectively be tiring and stressful; nevertheless, I have never regretted taking up teaching as my second career.

My First and Second Jobs

My first job was that of being a secretary assisting lawyers in preparing legal documents and managing bad debts recovery for a local bank. I graduated in 2002 and Singapore was in a recession then. I considered myself lucky enough to secure a job as compared to some of my peers who were still out of work. The challenging aspects of my first job came from having to deal with debtors coming from all walks of life, in managing clients' high expectations and lawyers' demand for attention to minute details.

My second job was in banking. On the first day of work, I was exposed to the bank's collection and analytics system and was amazed by the different programs and tools we had to use at work! This job definitely widened my perspective of people's lives. I realized that poor financial habits are prevalent among younger Singaporeans as they spend way beyond their means and end up borrowing from credit cards to feed this lifestyle. It prompted me into thinking that young Singaporeans should have access to financial education.

I'm Ready to Teach

It was through the things I experienced on my earlier jobs and after a lot of reflections on my part; I felt I was ready to teach. This profession allows me to interact with the young, teach them the right values and prepare them for life. The part-time stints I did since my secondary school days and the 5 years of private sector experience allow me to see life from a different perspective. My prior working

experience also prepared me well for the rigours of being a teacher. I did not find adjusting to a teaching career as daunting as others claimed. My salary cut was substantial when I first entered the service. However, the ministry recognizes second career entrant's previous job experiences and subsequently over 2 years, my salary was adjusted to be on par with that in the private sector. Of course, I do miss some benefits of my previous jobs. For instance, as a teacher, I no longer have the luxury of lunch time hours where I could have a meal with my colleagues and do some shopping or banking. My lunch now is confined to the school canteen and pantry. However, I understand the demands of teaching, and these are small sacrifices that one has to make.

Keys to Success

There are some factors to building a successful career as a teacher. I believe that one of the key factors is having the right mental attitude. If you think what you are doing is right for your students, go for it. There were times when I used innovative teaching methods, visual aids and creative presentation to get a message through to my students and it worked, because I believed in what I was doing.

Time management is another crucial factor. Teachers often have to do multi-tasks and good planning can help to prioritize things that need to be completed urgently. A day before your lessons starts, it is good to review your schedule before hand, and go through mentally your activities for the next day. It is also very important that important events, meetings are recorded so as to ensure that these are not missed and given the highest priority.

It helps tremendously when you have a supportive partner. My husband is very supportive of my profession and he encourages me even when I feel drained. There



Regardless of race, language or religion.



My first



“ The new vision in teaching is to Lead, Care and Inspire! No matter how tired you may be, think of the impact your teaching can have on your students. They create your future. ”

are moments when I feel bogged down by work and his encouragement really helps a lot.

Lastly, I will close by sharing some tips which I feel have helped me develop a career in teaching

Number one: Give yourself a break from work on weekends. I stop work after Saturday noon. I deserve time with my loved ones and friends.

Number two: Treat teaching as a hobby. All the administrative work is just part of this hobby.

Number three: Be sincere in your dealings with your students and fellow educators. Be humble and adopt a learning attitude towards every aspect.

Number four: Be a parent to every child. I used this during my interview: Being a teacher is akin to being a mother to a child. A mother will give her very best to her child, just like a teacher would. So, give your best to your students!

by Ms Camilla Lim,
a Singapore Teachers' Union member



Outdoor CIP with my students.



Those good old days in camp.